

Monumental Discourses:
Sculpting Juan de Oñate from the Collected Memories of the
American Southwest

Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der
Philosophischen Fakultät IV – Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften –
der Universität Regensburg

wieder vorgelegt von
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Freiburg, Juni 2014

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ABBREVIATIONS

Organizations and Institutions:

NM HCPL	New Mexico Hispanic Culture Preservation League
OMVC	Oñate Monument and Visitors Center, Alcalde, NM
UTEP	University of Texas at El Paso
PDNG	Paso del Norte Group
XII TVC	XII Travelers Volunteer Committee
SWOP	Southwest Organizing Project
TIF	Tax Increment Financing

Newspapers:

AJ	Albuquerque Journal
AT	Albuquerque Tribune
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
EPT	El Paso Times
EPHP	El Paso Herald-Post
LJN	La Jicarita News: A Community Advocacy Newspaper for Northern NM
NYT	New York Times
SFNM	Santa Fe New Mexican

PROLOGUE

I PROSPECT

Think of the past as space expanding infinitely beyond our vision ... Then we choose a prospect. [...] Now we map what we see, marking some features, ignoring others, altering an unknown territory ... into a finite collection of landmarks made meaningful through their connections. History is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveler.

(Henry Glassie, epigraph to Meinig 1998)

The present study maps the New Mexican past by drawing meaningful connections between three monument projects dedicated to the commemoration of ‘Spanish’ conquistador don Juan de Oñate. During the *Cuartocentenario* of 1998, when the state of New Mexico celebrated the 400th anniversary of the ‘arrival’ of Spanish colonists in 1598 with reenactments, community celebrations, cultural and academic events, the Oñate monuments emerged as symbolic landmarks of regional history, encasing four hundred years of the Hispanic experience in New Mexico in the memorable image of the conquistador. The monuments are physical landmarks in the territory of present-day New Mexican society, they connect the border metropolis of El Paso, TX, with the city of Albuquerque in central New Mexico and with the village of Alcalde in New Mexico’s rural north along the axis of the historic *Camino Real*. First and foremost, they promote a Hispanic revision of New Mexican history which – considering their setting in the multiethnic spaces of lived experience in New Mexico – provoked enduring controversy about commemorating Oñate. As much as the historical revision threatened to silence further regional memories, the controversy about it tended to distract from the complexities of the New Mexican past. As a matter of fact, the monuments evoke the spatial and socio-cultural transformations following Spanish conquest, U.S. American annexation, and Anglo American cultural reinvention of New Mexico. Owing to these evocations, on the surface New Mexico’s Oñate monuments display perspectives on the past embraced by the Hispanic community and represent their attempts at constructing a shared identity. Yet at second sight, the various interpretations of the regional past that crystallize and compete with each other at New Mexico’s Oñate sites reveal a collection of (conflicting) memories that originate in different, yet overlapping spatial imaginations that inform the perception of New Mexico as a (part of a larger) cultural region. *Monumental Discourses: Sculpting Juan de Oñate from the Collected Memories of the American Southwest* looks at the establishment of the sites and investigates the so-called Oñate controversy for the various motivations of the monument makers. It argues that the commemoration and monumentalization of Oñate

together with the controversy about his historic merit contribute to remaking the landscapes of memory that constitute regional and ethnic identities in New Mexico today, irrespective of state lines and national boundaries. It investigates the monuments as localized representations of American identities, intended to function as sites of memory in geographical spaces which have become *topoi* of Anglo, Hispanic and Native American discourse.

Owing to the subject matter of the sites under investigation, colonial Spanish history, and the eloquent advocacy for the projects on the part of Oñate proponents, the Hispanic voice will emerge as dominant in this study. Yet the analysis of the controversies surrounding Oñate demonstrates that the Hispanic voice has been under challenge from many positions within the complex, contested terrain of histories and identities in New Mexico. ‘Hispanic’ is used as U.S. census terminology since 1980, an outside ascription commensurate with my own position as an outside observer. I use the term to refer to New Mexicans whose family origins predate the extended U.S. territorial phase between 1848 and 1912 and can be traced back as far as Spanish reconquest (1692) following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 or even beyond that critical event in New Mexican history. Notwithstanding established usage, my study shows that the denominators for ethnic groups in the United States, especially for Spanish-speaking communities, must be challenged for the homogeneity of historical experience which they suggest.¹

My study is divided into five large chapters: At the core of the dissertation project are the three case studies that explore and explain the planning processes at each monument

¹ Ethnic labels have been used to construct and legitimate social and cultural hierarchies and to proclaim regional identities, a recurring motif in the debate over Oñate commemoration. Terms for ethnic groups vary with regard to region, generation and political orientation, crossing class and color lines and including diverse national origins. The best account of ethnic labeling for New Mexico is provided in Gonzales’s thorough exploration (1993); cf. also Albrecht 1990; De Varona 2001; Marti 1982; Warmbrunn 1998; Weber 1973. The people who espouse Oñate commemoration often refer to themselves as ‘Spanish,’ a designation which I reject because it projects a historical fantasy rather than verifiable lines of descent. Further self-designations like *Mexicano*, *Chicano* or *Latino* emphasize a cultural rather than statistic understanding of group labels, or, like the terms *Nuevo-/Neo-mexicano* or *Hispano*, highlight the cultural distinctness of the Hispanic experience in New Mexico, the latter referring especially to the rural areas of northern New Mexico, the so-called Rio Arriba. I will use them only when the context suggests so; cf. Montgomery 2000: 492; Nostrand 2001. Especially for old-stock Hispanics in New Mexico, the term ‘Mexican American’ is not quite appropriate. As Montgomery convincingly argued, Mexico as a nation state and especially Mexican immigrants represent a realm of Otherness (2000: 497) because New Mexico’s cultural ties to Mexico through immigration after 1848 were always weaker than those of e.g. California or Texas. Likewise, *Chicano* only applies to New Mexico where it denotes an urban context, generational affiliation with civil rights activism and rejection of the assimilationist tendencies during the post-war years, as well as political solidarity with the power struggle of subjugated/ indigenous peoples and the working class throughout the Americas. *Latino* as an overarching label of self-definition has emerged in recent years to account for the experiences of Spanish-speaking peoples of various national backgrounds throughout the United States of America, suggesting a hemispheric awareness and a rejection of ties to European/Spanish colonization in the Americas; cf. Rodriguez 2003. Like ‘Mexican American’ and *Chicano*, it is incompatible with the self-perception of the groups in New Mexico who drive the controversy about Oñate.

project. I will show how through the three monuments a controversy over the commemoration of Oñate develops in steps that mark significant stages of a larger conversation with the New Mexican past which literally took place during the 1990s. The case studies introduce the concrete places of commemoration and familiarize the reader with the respective historical implications. In a second step, they unfold the establishment of the individual projects and thence proceed to the discussion of key aspects for each monument. While the case studies are arranged roughly chronologically for matters of orientation and while they reflect local particularities in their respective realization, they more importantly display an intensification of dialogicity in the anniversary events – as reflected in the chapter headings. Owing to the controversy over Oñate, these ‘monumental discourses’ have revealed an increasing, if contested multivocality of public commemorative space.

In the first chapter, the Prologue, I develop the theoretical contextualization for the discourse about commemoration and its sites in New Mexico. In a first step, I suggest to approach culture as a system of signification through memory, spatiality, and landscape as text, offering the terms as concepts for reading the Southwest. In a second subchapter, I present sites, monuments, and landscapes of memory as the units of investigation. The second half of the *Prologue* discusses and historicizes established images of the region as the respective systems of signification within which regional culture attains its meaning. The notion of *site* of memory suggests to pay particular attention to the spatial component of Oñate commemoration in New Mexico and to emphasize the conceptual convergence implied by the spatial turn in American Studies.

Chapter 2, the case study entitled Monologue, revolves around national constructions of cultural identity in its emphasis on place-making and mapping the Southwestern past in sculptor John Houser’s Oñate project for El Paso (1989-2007). Houser assumed the persona of “sculptor of the nation” with a gigantic equestrian sculpture that embodies his vision of the Southwestern past – and future! – in a monumental monologue about the achievement of individual heroes and their contributions to the building of an American nation. Claiming to map what is popularly referred to as ‘neglected Hispanic history’ in the urban space of the border city, Houser aspired to the format of Mount Rushmore’s hero worship of American icons as if size alone could make up for the expropriation and social exclusion Hispanic Americans have suffered since the annexation of the region in 1848. At the same time, the project aims at tying the marginal situation of El Paso back to the national core, invoking Anglo American foundation myths in the story of firsts which it affirmatively recounts.

Chapter 3, Dialogue, is concerned with the strategies of controlling space that became manifest at the Oñate Monument and Visitor Center (OMVC) in the village of Alcalde in

northern New Mexico (1991-1994). The chapter investigates the imaginary geographies that inform regional constructions of cultural identity: The county of Rio Arriba commissioned sculptor Reynaldo Rivera to give tangible shape to the founding of the state at a site that is located near the place of first colonial Spanish settlement. While the sculpture project celebrates the regional context as the heartland of *Hispano* consciousness, it disregards the fact that rural northern New Mexico represents a homeland to both Pueblos and *Hispanos*. Rivera designed an equestrian monument along classic conventions to honor Oñate. However, his initially monologic exchange with the past was transformed into a dialogue when “unknown vandals” raised previously silenced voices by cutting off the sculpture’s foot in 1998, pointing as much to past atrocities as to present inequities. Echoing the violence of the colonial era, the chopped-off foot enforced dialogue about the present meanings of Spanish colonization which resulted in subjugation and displacement, but also exchange and accomodation. Even though the foot was reattached, re-memembering Oñate had become part of a story of *mestizaje* rather than *Hispano* distinctiveness and exceptionalism.

Chapter 4, Trialogue, looks at the different ways of representing space, focusing on how the political construction of identity informs cultural topographies. The case study investigates the controversy occasioned by New Mexico’s *Cuartocentenario* over the appropriate form to recollect Oñate’s legacy in the urban spaces of Albuquerque (1997-2005). Prompted by a request for an Oñate monument endorsed by Hispanic advocacy groups, the city administration, the wider community and three artists engaged in a trialogue about identity, memory, and place that addressed questions about the appropriate place of memory in the urban space of the largest metropolitan area of New Mexico. Eventually the project was realized in two parts that circumscribe a field of artistic as well as political tension. It is exemplary for what James Young calls “collected memory” (1993; cf. also Glassberg 2001: 13, 53) and it highlights the political ends of commemoration when identity is to be constructed through strategies of exclusion and inclusion. In Albuquerque the controversy physically shaped the monument, which therefore not only reflects the history of cultural encounter but represents ongoing processes of cultural exchange.

I return to the theoretical frame of culture as a signifying system in the concluding chapter, the Epilogue, which offers an overarching emplotment of the three distinct projects by contextualizing them in the larger framework of cultural narratives. The chapter summarizes the trajectories perceived in the seemingly disparate stories of the three Oñate monuments and shows how the sites participate in the discourse that revolves around the ways in which individuals and groups use past events and places for identification and social cohesion. As ‘discourse materialized’ (Schein 1997: 663), the sites are most obviously linked

through the theme they address – the history of conquest as embodied in the figure of conquistador Juan de Oñate and spatialized in the route of the *Camino Real*. Although they each stake specific claims within their particular spatial contexts, the three sites evoke common issues and concerns that link the artists and audiences entangled in the passionate controversies about Oñate's place in the New Mexican past and about his significance for the present: Taking national foundation myths as their points of departure, they aim for a reconciliatory narrative of the past that intends to (re)stabilize group identities. The public objection to such a narrative became evident in the Oñate controversy as well as in the debates about monument design. I take this as an indication that as they seek to accommodate the contrary experiences of conquering and conquered groups, the three Oñate monuments reflect changing imaginations of the American Southwest. In order to reveal the concomitant politics of memory and place, I investigate the cultural topographies suggested by the monuments for the discursive strategies they reveal.

To me, the projects are united in their attempts at creating spaces for coming to terms with the (at least) tri-ethnic, bi-national past of the state and for evading the exclusionary and reductive implications of established forms of commemoration. As an American region, New Mexico increasingly distances itself from the image of an exotic tourist destination, despite the popular label of the 'Land of Enchantment.' In the evolving narrative, the region emerges from the Oñate controversy as a multiply colonized space where debates must embrace simultaneity, unevenness and power asymmetries. I approach the region as a dynamic, often conflictual multicultural field where memories, spaces, and identities are constantly redefined by the internal as well as external forces of social, ethnic, cultural, generational, and economic interaction. The monuments not only evoke vital frames of reference for Native Americans, Hispanic or Anglo New Mexicans, they activate the trans-cultural and transnational potential inherent in the concept of 'borderlands.' I take this to indicate that in the perception of region notions of rootedness and origins are about to be replaced by notions of mobility and destination, and that the monuments to Oñate thus raise resounding issues in the national (trans-)formation and imagination of 'America.'

II CONCEPTS FOR READING THE SOUTHWEST: MEMORY, SPATIALITY, SIGNIFICATION

In America, space has played the part that time has played in the older cultures of the world.

(Chidester & Linenthal 1995: ix)

As cultural geographer David Harvey reminds us in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, “space and time are basic categories of human existence” (1990: 201; viii). My study will centrally engage these basic categories, for they give room to the expressions and reflections of individual as well as collective human experience that form the core of this study. My investigation of the cultural agendas that inform New Mexicans’ perspectives on the past and on space – made manifest in their sites and rites of memory – builds on the productivity of a position in between disciplines for an academic project that aims at mapping the ways in which “Americans conceptualize their past” (Glassberg 1991: 143). Methodologically, I assess the cultural artifacts that constitute collective memory ethnographically, by first tracing the process of their creation and thus the commemorative and spatial practices that have made them accessible to experience. In a second step, I aim to access ideas about the past and the ideologies transported by the monuments to Oñate by analyzing representational strategies and publicized discourse – as reflected in planning documents, promotional materials, newspaper coverage of the public controversies and political debates on the local, regional, and national levels – and by conducting interviews with central actors and critics.² It became evident during the course of research that a focus on memory alone could neither sufficiently explain the cultural and social phenomena observable at the monument sites nor offer effective resolutions for the entrenched controversies over the New Mexican past. My observations confirmed Foucault’s contention that temporal conceptualizations of experience have tended to overwhelm spatial frames: In the case of Oñate commemoration, framing memory in predominantly temporal terms contributed to submerging the histories of displacement characteristic for America’s colonial pasts. What was needed were explanations which account for the complexities of the actors’ lived experience in the borderlands, which

² I retrieved extensive archival material during two research stays in 2001 and 2005 at Southern Methodist University (SMU), the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), and at the University of New Mexico (UNM) with valuable help from Andrea Boardman (SMU) and Ann Massmann (NMU). I analyzed planning documents, news coverage, announcements, advertisement, promotional material, and letters to the editor; further coverage on the progress of individual projects was retrieved during a brief research trip in 2008 and online. I conducted qualitative unstructured interviews with Nora Naranjo-Morse, John Houser, Millie Santillanes, and Debbie Lopez in 2005 and 2008. Most important to me as academic interlocutors were Felipe Gonzales and Kathy Freise at UNM.

challenge the ephemeral tropes and metaphors of memory discourse by insisting on the concrete materiality of sites, and which pay heightened attention to the political economy of space. My discourse analysis is therefore both decidedly interdisciplinary and deliberately spatial: It integrates constructivist and interpretive approaches from the Writing Culture school of cultural anthropology, memory studies, and the New Cultural Geography in order to shed light on the ways people emplot and emplace memories. I intend to elucidate the interdependence of arguments in the apparently incongruent debates on memory and space by focusing on the strategies of making, controlling and representing meaning that can be observed at the monument sites. Weighing temporal against spatial frames of reference – moving between the study of memory and the study of landscape – I hope to recover and explain experiences that are otherwise suppressed by acts of commemoration that solely foreground the temporal. In selecting a deliberately spatial perspective, I hope to unravel the tangled meanings coming forth at these dynamic expressions of remembering and forgetting. In its attention to place-making, my study on monuments to Spanish conquistador don Juan de Oñate contributes to discourses in American Cultural Studies that investigate the productivity of the ‘spatial turn’ for the study of American histories and cultures (cf. Halttunen 2006). It thus contextualizes the cultural phenomena observable at sites of memory within a larger trend towards spatial explanations in humanities scholarship since roughly the 1980s.

II.1 CULTURE: TIME (MEMORY)

In an approach that is ultimately indebted to Clifford Geertz’s *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), I am unfolding the symbolic and textual dimensions of cultural phenomena such as monuments in order to investigate the processes by which cultural meaning is constructed and communicated. On the theoretical level, the intellectual abstraction of culture as a web of significance suggests to turn the analytical focus on the various forms and encompassing ways in which people come to know their pasts and build identities from such knowledge. Thus, I take memory as one guiding principle of interpretation for this study: it provides an instrument, a pattern of explanation and a mode of thinking about the past. Its strength lies in the potential of opening a wide field of cultural phenomena to scholarly investigation, building on the assumption that memory responds to present needs of individuals or groups by establishing essential links to the past (cf. Kammen 1991). As Thelen argues, ‘the past’ is constructed and narrativized in terms of myth rather than fact (1989: viii; Confino 1997: 1387).³ For public historians, this points to the role of memory in nation-building for it

³ For Thelen (1989: xviii), myth is a (narrative) construction that responds to people’s actual needs in the present rather than a set of disembodied values representing cultural survivals from a distant past. Truettner offers a defi-

provides a shared mythology and symbolism which informs that feeling of attachment to the nation commonly referred to as patriotism (Glassberg 1993: 1). Especially in the latter sense, the concept of memory has found its way into popular discourses about knowing and representing the past.

The concept of memory accentuates “the connections between the cultural, the social, and the political, between representation and social experience” (Confino 1997: 1388; similarly Thelen 1989: vii). In analogy to Geertz’s understanding of culture, memory becomes a context rather than a cause for human behavior, and I understand sites as results of symbolic action to be “thickly described” through my case studies (1973: 14). Applying thick description in a study of memory – and especially to sites of memory – allows me to explain monuments in the Southwest as reflective of and simultaneously constitutive for individual and collective experience in time *and* space vis-à-vis grander constructions of regional and national historical narratives. I take Möckel-Rieke’s designation of memory as “the *place* where past and present *interact* and thereby define each other” (1998: 8; emphases mine) as an indication to contend that a focus on processes which transmit and translate “meaning *across time and space*” (Johnson 2004: 317; emphasis mine) establishes the common interest of memory studies and cultural geography. When the two disciplines approach the expressive forms that testify to the connections between past and present from their respective angles, they enrich each other’s insight into the adaptation of past events for present uses.

II.1.1 MEMORY IN AMERICAN STUDIES

From its academic genealogy, memory emerges – much like myth and symbol, or civil religion before – as an intellectual construct to explain the processes scholars perceive at work within (American) culture with regard to the relationship between past and present. Memory is a culturally and socially motivated artifact that embodies particular agendas, especially suited to diachronically anchoring people within shared – that is, consensual and/or contested – ways of making ‘the past’ usable for ‘the present.’ Accordingly, memory studies “primarily seek to understand the interrelationships between different versions of the past in the public arena. They investigate what the anthropologist Robert Redfield termed ‘the social organization of tradition’” (Glassberg 2001: 8-9; Watts 1994: 77).

inition of myth in relation to history that is particularly useful for my study: “Myth functions to control history, to shape it in text or image as an ordained sequence of events. The world is rendered pure in the process; complexity and contradictions give way to order, clarity, and direction. Myth, then, can be understood as an abstract shelter restricting debate. But myth can also function as ideology – as an abstraction broadly defining the belief system of a particular group or society”; qtd. in Campbell 2000: 7.

Memory has been studied in its various cultural manifestations, resulting in an imposing number of monographs;⁴ it has been anthologized⁵ and has warranted special issues in journals as well as its own specialized journals.⁶ Given the scope of memory studies and the philosophical sophistication of the scholarship on memory, it cannot be the objective of this introduction to trace the discourse in all its complexity. Such work has been done competently by Glassberg (1996), Confino (1997), Olick and Robbins (1998), Hutton (2000), or Klein (2000), as well as Assmann (1999) or more recently Erll (2005), Grabbe and Schindler (2008) and Hebel (2009), to name but a few representative titles. The sheer amount of studies guided by a perception of memory as the past made usable for present concerns might be enlisted (cf. Hebel 2003: xi) to dispel Pierre Nora's notion of the disappearance of memory as a lived experience and it is evident that the study of memory has literally covered much ground since he observed that "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left" (Nora 1989: 7). Since the 1980s, memory as a concept has left its imprint on most of the humanities and social sciences (Hebel 2003: ix; Olick and Robbins 1998: 107). The concept of memory has become so widely applicable as to justify labeling memory studies a new paradigm for doing culture-historically oriented American Studies (cf. Hebel 2003: ix), inspiring further specialization in face of a rich and diverse subject matter and new memory technologies (cf. Gessner 2005).

Contrary to approaches that juxtapose history and memory as fundamentally different ways of producing knowledge about the past, I take my cue for this study from David Thelen's still referential argument that history and memory actually share the challenge of recovering and introducing the past to the present (1989: vii). Early memory studies often embraced acts of commemoration or their material representations as allegedly immediate expressions of vernacular history, contending that they contained a greater degree of authenticity than more elite cultural expressions. In a similar vein, public historians commended memory as a concrete, tangible concept which reduced academic detachment in relating to the past and opened it to immediate sensual experience, thus making past experiences more easily accessible for audiences across various educational backgrounds (Thelen 1989: vii; Glassberg 1996). In 'introducing the past to the present,' attention to the epistemological implications of the concept has increased and the distinct ways in which

⁴ For a thorough bibliography cf. Hebel 2003: xxii-xxxii.

⁵ Cf. recently Shackel 2001; Hebel 2003; Erll and Nünning 2004.

⁶ To give but a few prominent samples cf. *Representations* special issues "Memory and Counter-Memory" (1989); "Grounds for Remembering" (2000); *Amerikastudien / American Studies* special issue "Media and Cultural Memory" (1998); *Public Historian* special issues "History and Memory" (1996 and 1997) and "Architectures of Memory" (2005); *Media, Culture & Society* special issue "Social Memory and Media" (2003) and the journal *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* (1989-).

people organize their knowledge of the pasts that inform their lives as individuals as well as members of families, kinship groups or neighborhoods, or as citizens in local, regional and national communities have received increasingly sophisticated treatment. Rather than merely give access to an unchanging repertoire of unbroken traditions, memory reshapes the past through commemorative rituals enacted to respond to perceived needs in the present. Memory studies therefore have ventured beyond determining instances, recovering objects, or (re)presenting legacies of the past, instead asking for the motivations of such re-presentation and analyzing the origins of commemorative practice (cf. Confino 1997: 1392). Accordingly, my case studies focus on the commemorative acts observable at the monument sites and thoroughly search the public controversies for the motivations that inform these acts. My reading emphasizes the constructive utilization of the concept of memory along with its disciplinary implications, exploring the ways in which “cultures establish traditions and myths from the past to guide the conduct of their members in the present” (Thelen 1989: vii).

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs contended in *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (1925) that memory necessarily emerges from social interaction and in cultural conversation. It thus concerns what Jan Assmann (1992) called the connective structure of societies in its particular practices (commemoration, monument building) as well as in its symbolizations (tradition, myth). Accordingly, memory has become applied to frames of investigation that range from individual reconstructions of the past to the uses that cultures or nation-states assign to it. The “intersubjective practices of signification” within established discourses create memory as a socio-cultural artifact, manifest in what I call a ‘memory complex’ which may affirm the status quo (cf. Johnson 2004: 318), or challenge the “institutionally sanctioned *truth* about the past” (Möckel-Rieke 1998: 6). Minorities have often resorted to the critical potential of memory in order to construct their own histories. The study of memory thus focuses on the ways in which different memories interact within society, a multidimensional field where power is unevenly distributed among social groups that aim to wield instances from the past for present needs (cf. Confino 1997: 1391). A holistic perspective towards memory interprets the individual instance of commemoration against “the full spectrum of symbolic representations in a given culture” (Confino 1997: 1391). The study of memory therefore also entails a comparative dimension which focuses scholarly attention on the “similarities and differences in the ways individuals and groups construct memories” and thus allows scholars to position the individual within larger historical dynamics (Thelen 1989: viii; xiii). Because of the multidimensionality of commemoration, alternative perspectives on the past can materialize and be used to elucidate

the processes of change within a community and to show the mutual influences between smaller and larger social groups.

The attraction of memory as a tool for the interpretation of culture also originates in the observation that the past is remembered selectively and continually reshaped by individuals and groups (Thelen 1989: vii; xi-xii). Invoking a shared past creates coherence within a social group and circumscribes that group's identity at the same time that it operates as an effective mechanism of social differentiation whereby "memory turns into a systematic endeavor that utilizes analyzable strategies of inclusion and exclusion" (Möckel-Rieke 1998: 7).⁷ It is therefore not coincidental that the words memory and identity are "typically yoked together" in academic discourse. Identity has become a vital, if problematic part of memory discourse (Klein 2000: 143-44; cf. also Gillis 1994). Mostly, memory studies interpret the politics of memory as a politics of identity (Confino 1997: 1393), characterized not just by consensus but by clashes between individual memories and "elites' preferences for turning the past into myths that promote uniformity and stability" in particular sites or over particular historic events (Thelen 1989: xvii). When a group identifies and agrees upon memories and explores their significance (cf. Thelen 1989: xii), this may produce identity, but the articulations and representations thereof may also become central issues of contestation in cultural conflicts over the place and meaning(s) of the past.

As memory has come to be perceived as a phenomenon pervading and "re-enchanting" the realities of everyday life by invoking the past (Klein 2000: 145), memory studies always need to undertake an "exercise in disenchantment," to cite Thomas Lacqueur's memorable phrase that seems so appropriate for the study of a region dubbed 'The Land of Enchantment.' Consequently, the present study looks closely at "how memory is produced and meaning invested, a process necessarily informed and circumscribed by cultural context" (Lacqueur 2000: 6). It deliberately extends the cultural context to its spatial foundations, seeking to ground the memory of Oñate in the overlapping landscapes of memory that have come to constitute the American Southwest.

⁷ Cf. also Olick and Robbins 1998: 106, 111; Möckel-Rieke 1998: 11; Johnson 2004: 317.

II.2 CULTURE: SPATIALITY (LANDSCAPE)

When the phenomenologist Edward Casey observes that “[t]o live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in” (Casey 1996: 18; Halttunen 2006: 5), he points to the circumstance that in order to derive the meanings of culture from within a “*web of significance*” explications must engage the spatiality and concrete location of cultural phenomena such as monuments as much as their textuality and symbolism. Knowledge, in this understanding, is derived from the close interrelatedness of place, practice and experience. Furthermore, cultural geographer Nigel Thrift exhorts us in a memorable alliteration to consider knowledge as constituted through “sight but also cite and site” (2000: 2), that is we need to consider perspective, reference, and location in order to account for the ways in which people come to rationalize experiences with their environment(s) and establish essential links to the spaces within which they make their lives. Space assumes vital significance as a process informed by society *and culture* that enables human beings to navigate between representation and experience in their daily lives (cf. Hirsch and Hanlon 1995). Thus expanding my view from individual instances to larger contexts, I arrive at the concept of spatiality as the second guiding idea for interpretation in this thesis. This takes me to using the notion of ‘landscape’ in a decidedly cultural understanding, as a concept which “presents a historically specific way of experiencing the world developed by, and meaningful to, certain social groups” (Cosgrove 1984: 15; cf. also 19). Landscape highlights “the fusion of the physical with the imaginative structures” (Upton 1991: 198) which, like memory, become manifest in multiple forms: as material objects, as texts, as metaphors and as part of discourses (Lewis 1987; Duncan and Duncan 1988; Barnes and Duncan 1992), or as spatial ensembles with their constituent parts, often equated with particular places and times (Conzen 1990).⁸ In addition to its artifactual character, and likewise similar to the concept of memory, the concept of landscape entangles sensual experience and intellectual abstraction (cf. Upton 1991).

It is intriguing for a study in sites of memory that Carl Ortwin Sauer established the classical tradition of landscape studies in close proximity and conceptual analogy to historical concerns when he proclaims that “[t]he facts of geography are place facts; their association gives rise to the concept of landscape. Similarly, the facts of history are time facts; their association gives rise to the concept of period” (Sauer 1967: 97).⁹ Sauer’s chorology, the

⁸ Cf. also Schein 1997: 660-61; Crang 1998: 27; Hebel 2003: x.

⁹ With *The Morphology of Landscapes* (1925), Sauer established landscape studies as the core of American cultural geography at Berkeley in the 1920s. His approach remained the “classical tradition of geography as chorological relation” (Crang 1998: 15) for most of the twentieth century. Chorology is concerned with the ways

investigation of space for its systematic association of discrete spatial facts, already suggests a relational logic that supplements models of linear causation and adds connectivity to hierarchical classification. When space is entered into the equation, rather than merely offering a physical scenery or an assemblage of material properties it alters the logic by which meanings are derived from the phenomena observed. Landscape emerges as a political and cultural process which is anchored in social life and delimits a space within which to live socially. A spatial approach to the study of the past therefore changes the critical understanding of the signifying system which must appear less in the manner of stratigraphy or layered sedimentation but rather resemble the interconnected growth of rhizomes.

II.2.1 SPATIALITY IN AMERICAN STUDIES

American space, as Chidester and Linenthal point out, has been produced from the beginning out of multicultural relations and in intercultural conflict (1995: xiii). Most notably, in the historiography of the American West foregrounding concerns over space has a long tradition: Issues of national space informed Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier hypothesis (1893) and Walter Prescott Webb's notion of the Great American Desert, also referred to as the Plains hypothesis (1931), but also Herbert Eugene Bolton's Spanish Borderlands (1921). So central were these spatial approaches that Franklin and Steiner (1992) even argued that space assumed a central position and held a special significance for the American experience and thus for American Studies in general. Therefore, it seems almost self-evident that memory studies comprehend the spatial organization of tradition. In analogy to the search for a usable past, one could speak of the search for 'a usable terrain' when investigating American landscapes as signifying systems that account for the particularities of American experiences and that reinforce specific constructions of cultural selves.

The spatial turn is reflected in the two issues of *Representations* that have come to be understood as signposts in the history of memory study, *Memory and Counter-Memory* (1989) and *Grounds for Remembering* (2000). They display a shift from substances (Memory and Counter-Memory) to process (Remembering), from the temporal implications of

in which landscapes bring together different geographical phenomena and processes in unique patterns within a specific area. It is fundamental to the concept of areal differentiation from which larger spatial units such as regions are constructed (cf. Crang 1998: 15). In Sauer's understanding, landscapes are the result of collective human activity that produces "a layered accumulation of artifacts created by that disorderly accumulation of people we call our ancestors" (1987: 23). The theoreticall shortcomings of Sauerian geography – an exaggerated focus on rural traditions and their material production and a concomitant neglect of process and agency in the making of the cultural landscape, an emphasis on 'reading' over criticism, as well as his tendency to ascribe super-organic qualities to culture as the agent of spatial transformation – were tolerated in view of the productivity of the Sauerian tradition that lent itself especially well to historical approaches; cf. Johnson 2004: 322; Mitchell 2000: 26-34; Schein 1997: 661.

‘memory’ to its spatial foundations (*Grounds for Remembering*), and from metaphorical sites to realized places. In *Grounds for Remembering* (2000), various authors address the tension between the spatial and the temporal and the coming about of a site of memory based on the realization that in the construction of a sense of self through historic narratives, time had previously been privileged over space (cf. Laqueur 2000: 1). The titles to meanwhile canonical studies of historic preservation or popular memory like *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Lowenthal 1985) or *Time Passages* (Lipsitz 1990) further indicate the tension of temporality and spatiality in contemporary imaginations of the past. Yet while time and space as the fundamental parameters of human experience seem to be ideally subsumed in the notion of ‘sites of memory,’ scholars fully embraced the “material base of memory studies” (Hebel 2003: x) only after Pierre Nora emphasized the territoriality implied in the invocation of a shared past for purposes of nation-building in his comprehensive study of the French past, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992). They thus opened avenues for my approach to memory studies that strives to explicitly comprehend the spatial organization of tradition.

For the field of public history, David Glassberg reflected upon the change in historical outlook in the 1996 issue of *The Public Historian*, and he also traced it in his “Patriotism from the Ground Up” (1993). Both Glassberg’s *Sense of History* (2001) and Paul Shackel’s *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape* (2001) consolidated the turn to space in American public history. Likewise, the comprehensive quartet of memory studies by Bodnar (1992), Kammen (1991), Linenthal (1991), and Lowenthal (1985) testifies to an increased spatial sensibility in researching American memory.

American (Cultural) Studies proper began to reconsider the significance of place for the American experience building on research into space and place done in anthropology and the New Cultural Geography during the 1990s. The reexamination of space from an interdisciplinary angle first produced Franklin and Steiner’s seminal *Mapping American Culture* (1992). The 2005 ASA conference, *Groundwork: Space and Place in American Cultures* (cf. Halttunen 2006), testified to and recapitulated the ongoing preoccupation with spatial aspects of American culture throughout the last decade. Recent publications gather work on space done by American Studies scholars in the fields of literature, art history, architecture, urban history, film studies, or history of technology as in Hebel’s *Sites of Memory in American Literatures and Cultures* (2003) or Benesch and Schmidt’s *Space in America* (2005).

A spatial approach matches the concerns of memory studies also with regard to their emphasis on the particular and their privileging of multiplicity over consensus. Especially in the sense of ‘locality studies’ (cf. Massey 1984), it seeks to analyze processes and phenomena

related to particular places in a flexible combination of “the unique and the general, an understanding of structure and agency, space and time, the empirical thickly described and the theoretical concretely grounded” (Soja 1987: 293). On a theoretical ‘meso-level,’ analyzing spatializations of the past integrates empirical description and theoretical abstraction (cf. Soja 1987: 292-93). With regard to this reorientation, the present study contributes a thick description of a series of particular if not unique places that may indicate a reconceptualization of the cultural topographies of the landscapes designated as ‘the’ American Southwest.

II.3 CULTURE: SIGNIFICATION (LANDSCAPE AS TEXT)

Upon the spatial turn, landscape was seen as “a signifying system of great but unappreciated social and political importance [that] offers enormous promise as an object of study” (Duncan 1990: 3). Going beyond perceptions of landscape as a framing device or a material inventory of cultural expressions, the new geographers approached and interpreted landscape as “the cumulative *symbolic* expression of *cultural values and social behavior* worked out upon particular localities over a long span of history” (Meinig 1973: 545, emphases mine).¹⁰ Taken as signifying systems, American memories and American spaces both contain the particularities of American experience and reinforce specific constructions of cultural selves. I aim to retrace the progressive contextualization entailed by the turn to space and direct my attention to the abstraction of meaning that is achieved when “[g]eographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and creates landscapes or regions for human existence” (Escobar 2001: 143). Interpretive approaches build on the premise that “landscape is a document that we can read” (Lewis 1987: 23).¹¹ Consequently, landscape is read for traces of human activity inscribed on it and turning it into a text or palimpsest, authored by diverse cultures and their memories (cf. Schein 1997: 662). Therefore, through discursive and material representations in and of space, group identity is geographically delimited and social order is inscribed onto the cultural landscape. Reading and interpreting landscapes as texts, then, merges geographical and cultural approaches in order to uncover the intellectual construction principles of spaces that are increasingly perceived as topographies of ideas about community, identity and the past.

¹⁰ Cf. Lewis 1987: 23; Stilgoe 1982; Starrs 1998: 492; Mitchell 2000: 35.

¹¹ This “document” had its most alert reader in John Brinckerhoff Jackson and an intellectual platform in Jackson’s influential journal *Landscape* (established in 1952). In Jackson’s view, everyday landscapes convey meaning coming “from the hardscrabble and routine” (Starrs 1998: 494) and display complexity and connectivity in “the significance of the shared, the common” (496).

In addition to being a historical and rhetorical construction, Upton further argues that a cultural landscape highlights “the fusion of the physical with the imaginative structures that all inhabitants of the landscape use in constructing and construing it” (1991: 198). It can therefore be approached as a system of cultural signs and meanings which is more durable and more resistant to cultural change than other systems of signification (cf. Klein 1992: 482, 486). This accounts paradigmatically for the (geographical) area of investigation of this study – the so-called American Southwest – where various ethnic memories are arranged in spatial matrices which condense experience in persistent spatial metaphors: The region is alternately (re)presented as ‘Land of Enchantment,’ ‘Indian country,’ ‘*Hispano* homeland’ or ‘*Aztlán*.’ These designations evoke historical experiences of the frontier, the reservation, or the borderlands, respectively, and translate experiences and spatial images to places which thence emerge as ‘Taos’ or ‘Santa Fe,’ ‘the Pueblo,’ or ‘the *barrio*.’ The suggestive spatial framings point to the processes of superimposition, contestation, encounter and integration of cultural traditions that have contributed to the popular imaginations of the Southwestern past. My case studies aim at developing these spatial frames in order to contextualize the “structures of signification” that I observe – the monuments,¹² the controversies,¹³ the rhetoric of public art,¹⁴ and public space¹⁵ – in a “thick description” of the sites. At the same time, the case studies aim to account for the existential necessities and social realities of life in one of the borderlands of the Americas. While each individual monument might appear to scrutiny as a “small fact,” in their interrelatedness to each other and thus in the implications for the respective cultural spaces constructed around and through them, the three monuments represent Geertz’s “densely textured facts” and “complex specifics” that allow access to the conceptual world and that bring us to the conclusions that help “support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life” (1973: 23, 28). Notwithstanding

¹² My use of the term follows the differentiation of monument and memorial suggested by Danto (1985). He interprets monuments as exhortations to honor the past and as representations of foundational myths. Monuments bear triumphalist features, marking moments of victory or conquest or honoring heroes, and are inherently public. I will return to the discussion in Chap. 4. Cf. also Gessner 2000: 16; Freise 2003: 103; 114.

¹³ I accessed public opinion about the controversial monument in media reports and Letters to the Editor. The articles function as moments in the construction of cultural identities, showing how individuals invoke the historical imagination in order to create a usable past for a specific group in a distinct geographical area and thus claim equal participation in the dominant cultural discourses of America.

¹⁴ Hein first defines public art pragmatically as “art installed by public agencies in public places and at public expense” (1996: 2). Its “origin, history, location, and social purpose” render a work of art public (1). She then expands the “public art of place and time” to encompass the symbolic and political dimensions of site and memory in a “public art of meaning” (2) that engages the world and “reclaims the political status of all art” (5).

¹⁵ The spaces around the monument projects – downtown El Paso, the federal lands of Rio Arriba Country, the sculpture garden at the Albuquerque Museum – are all freely accessible to a general audience. Yet processes of urban planning (El Paso) and institutionalization (Alcalde, Albuquerque) qualify them as increasingly semi-public, i.e. they subject visitors to the rules of the institutions with which they are associated; cf. also Low 1996.

the local particularities and artistic idiosyncrasies that characterized the planning of the monuments and that have been challenged in the controversies accompanying it, I identify patterns of discourse that express shared beliefs about the relevance of the past for present formulations of identity and for claims to agency in a contested multicultural field. The patterns of discourse and the planning processes represent complex symbolic action directed at making and negotiating cultural meaning in the 1990s Southwest (cf. Geertz 1973: 12-13). The issues raised in local narratives about the places and spaces of cultural identity transcend the regional context and speak to national, even global concerns of accommodating difference in a multicultural setting.

II.4 CONCEPTUAL CONVERGENCE: THE SPATIAL TURN

The study of memory and the study of human space in the humanities and social sciences – fields concerned with the temporal and the spatial dimensions of human existence respectively – not only discovered a shared interest but effectively converged beginning in the early 1990s (Said 2000: 175).¹⁶ Architectural historian Dell Upton remarks how “[t]he boundaries among the humanities are dissolving as scholars of many disciplines examine the relationships among human experience and the generation of meaning. The landscape is one of the central concerns of these new humanists” (Upton 1991: 198). The interconnection of place and society as well as memory and identity became a central concern of the new cultural geography as well as of memory studies, both fields taking their cues from the previous shift of attention and approach to the particular articulations of cultural phenomena in social and public history or in material culture. Constructivist and interpretive perspectives emphasized the artifactual character of cultural phenomena and investigated memory as a form of the usable past, while places and landscapes were interpreted as systems of signification and materialized discourse unfolding ‘usable terrain.’ Faced with a “sea-change” (Harvey) in cultural as well as political-economic practices since the early 1970s which geographer Don Mitchell attributes to the decline of old empires, the rise of independent states, the Cold War, as well as to a rise of identity-based politics, new migration patterns, and the globalization of media and commodities (2000: 40), critics found that the “previously dominant rhetoric of temporal modes of explanation and understanding in the social sciences [had] failed

¹⁶ Said notes how terminology reflects or even prefigures a shift of attention towards the role of space in human affairs, e.g. when comprehensive processes of economic transformation are subsumed under the spatial image of globalization or when past events and traumata are powerfully evoked through place names like Gettysburg, Auschwitz or Hiroshima (2000: 175). The events that put Said’s observation into relief, of course, are the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001, and the still evolving form(s) of remembering them. Whether the site will be evoked by the date or by the spatial designation will offer a revealing commentary on the significance of this traumatic experience for America as a culture and a nation.

sufficiently to account for the realities of contemporary existence” (Unwin 2000: 12). The postmodern condition of the last decades of the twentieth century called for a novel and still undertheorized flexible and situational interdisciplinarity to account for the “fundamental restructuring in the ways we think about and experience history and geography, sequence and simultaneity, events and localities, ‘period’ and ‘region,’ the encompassing temporality and spatiality of social life” (Soja 1987: 290). According to Harvey, the perceived fundamental changes caused “new dominant ways in which we experience space and time” to emerge (1989a: vii). By the 1980s, “the time was ripe for space,” as Edward Soja memorably quipped in his assessment of the transformations of cultural geography (1987: 292), contending that space and geography might “be displacing the primacy of time and history as the distinctively significant interpretive dimensions of the contemporary period” (289). Accordingly, social and critical theorists like Foucault or Said endorsed the “invasive spatialization of social theory” with their writings and challenged established divisions of academic disciplines (cf. Soja 1987: 292; Unwin 2000: 18).

Yet while it may have seemed as if “the language of space and place was everywhere” (Mitchell 2000: 60), coming suddenly and out of nowhere, the epoch of space that Foucault had casually proclaimed already in 1967 had been prefigured by another set of reconceptualizations in the humanities and social sciences that occurred roughly simultaneously: The idea that space is socially produced has long been one of the fundamental assumptions of cultural anthropology and prefigured the reorientation of cultural geography (Unwin 2000: 11). People’s connection to places and spaces as a context for individual and collective “experiences of social relatedness” (Feld and Basso 1996), also referred to as place attachment, was investigated under the political and cultural conditions of exile, displacement, borders and land rights, as Feld and Basso point out, as well as with regard to the implications of new spatial concepts and metaphors of mobility such as deterritorialization, migration, traveling, border-crossing or diaspora (cf. Escobar 2001: 141). In response to the quantitative trends in the social sciences (and thus also geography), cultural geographers made a case for the relevance of cultural approaches by proposing the concepts of symbolic space and social formation as objects for study, and opting for explanation over description (cf. Meinig 1979; Soja 1987: 290).

Premised on a politicized concept of culture designated to account for ideologies of race, class and gender and for the role of language and discourse in producing cultural space, geographers eventually integrated concerns of social theory and radical cultural geography when they investigated the geographies of cultural processes, as envisioned by Cosgrove already in the early 1980s (Mitchell 2000: 57; Crang 1998: 11). Looking critically at space

and place further affirmed the insight that culture and identity are constituted both on the levels of abstract knowledge and emotional affiliation (cf. Mitchell 2000: 63, Crang 1998: 2). Building on a new consensus across disciplines which proposes that “culture is spatial” and thus constitutes our worlds in the spaces and spatial practices that accompany our daily lives (Mitchell 2000: 63), cultural geography coupled the cultural and the spatial turns in investigating culture and society in and through lived spaces, confirming Mitchell’s ironic assessment that “cultural geography is all over the place” (2000: xiv).

Carrying further Sauer’s earlier geographical explanations of cultural differentiation and change (Mitchell 2000: 64; Crang 1998: 15), cultural geographers now connected the local and particular to transnational and global dynamics (cf. Mitchell 2000: 61-64). Reinstating the idiographic approach through an emphasis on particular cultural processes over measuring and quantification, they contributed to the cultural critique and shared the sensibilities displayed in Cultural Studies for issues of social hierarchy, the unequal distribution of power and the subtle or overt strategies of oppression. In addition to the integration of constructive, interpretive, and processual approaches and to a focus on contemporary, urban landscapes, cultural geographers increased their attention to the spatial manifestations of race, class, and gender and cultivated a heightened awareness for the spatial workings of political interests. Thus understanding geography as operating within systems of power and domination that differentiate, hegemonize, and globalize cultures and places qualified their approaches as constituting a *New Cultural Geography*. In their attempts at explaining the ways people make sense of the world, new cultural geographers spatialized identity to account for the unequal distribution of the capacities to shape, define and, literally, emplace those identities. They replaced the prescriptive, static features that had established spatial differentiation with a fluid, “progressive sense of place” as postmodern geographer Doreen Massey called it (1993). Furthermore, they interpreted culture as “always something to be *explained* as it is socially produced through myriad struggles over and in spaces, scales, and landscapes” and as dependent on social, political, and economic forces operating through time and space (Mitchell 2000: xvi, emphasis in original). The politics of culture and/in space determine who belongs in and to the space of a city or a region, for example, and decide who will be represented in what kind of space. The manifold cultural struggles and social contests, as Said reminds us, ensue over shared territory “which necessarily involves overlapping memories, narratives, and physical structures” (2000: 182). The urgency of the debates about identities that both reflected and contributed to processes of place-making is emphasized in Mitchell’s exhortation to keep in mind that “arguments over culture are arguments over real

spaces, over landscapes, over the social relations that define the places in which we and others live” (2000: 5-6).

III.1 UNITS OF INVESTIGATION: PLACE – SPACE – LANDSCAPE

III.1.1 PLACE

Casey (1996) presents place as both a (constructed) reality and a category of thought to be unfolded from three necessary yet sufficient features: geographic location, material form, and investment with meaning and value. Location describes our here and now and refers to locales that we name, identify, and represent. It has physicality, it is constituted by cultural objects, and is not just made but also continuously attended to by people (Escobar 2001: 140 n2; Hirsch 1999: 671; Gieryn 2000: 464-65). As people interact with their world, be it through work, travel, or leisure, or through representation or symbolization, they give it symbolic significance based on specific intentional presumptions (Crang 1998: 104; Hirsch 1999: 671). On the one hand, places function as the instruments by which spaces are ideologically charged through meaning and practice. On the other hand, as a conceptual category place transcends location and becomes a topos of cultural significance when physical location is invested with a sense of historical depth, cultural meaning, sentiment, and, not least, economic value. Public historian David Glassberg addresses the temporal practices of place in his “Six Axioms for Thinking About Place in America” (2001: 122-25) which summarize the transformation of symbols/meaning into materiality: “Public activities such as holding a commemorative ceremony, erecting a monument, and marking a historical site or district makes places visible by linking what ordinarily cannot be seen – a community’s values and reminiscences, its history – to features in the physical environment” (124). Places are experienced over time and across space, and they establish social cohesion: To Crang, “[s]paces become places as they become ‘time-thickened.’ They have a past and a future that binds people together round them” (1998: 103). Collective experience, social interaction and cultural significance therefore qualify places as sites where a sense of social relatedness is created whence identity for a community can be derived (Hirsch 1999: 671; Crang 1998: 103, 109). For Escobar, the fact that “[p]ersonal and cultural identity is bound up with place” (2001: 143) attributes place with a symbolic dimension, i.e. temporal associations, social and affective bonds turn it into a site where cultural identity is negotiated. Place thus provides the foundation for being in the world, for the relatedness of people and places that Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) in his seminal treatise referred to as *topophilia*, the affective bonds that create one’s spatial belonging. While place

contains sedimented social structures and cultural practices, as Pierce Lewis observed (1979), it also means “recognizing that place, body, and environment integrate with each other; that places gather things, thoughts and memories in particular configurations; and that place[, more an event than a thing,] is characterized by openness rather than by a unitary self-identity” (Escobar 2001: 143). In the American context, the significance attached to places has often been involved with national designs. Public historians like Linenthal or Lowenthal shared Nora’s assumption that the remembered past informs present perceptions of national identity, and by inference extended it to encompass the ethnic, regional, or transnational identities that constitute social groups. Only during the last two decades has the accent shifted from national identity understood as a forging of unity out of diverse origins toward a more pluralistic conceptualization of the United States as a nation of nations (cf. Kammen 1999: 475) and eventually of transnational integration (Hebel 2009).

III.1.2 SPACE

While defining space has proven a futile undertaking as it exists in a dialectic relationship with place, there are some features that point to the qualitative difference of the two concepts. According to cultural anthropologist Arturo Escobar, Western philosophy traditionally attributes to space absolute, universal, and unlimited validity and conceives of place as the particular, limited, local, and bounded (2001: 141). When space is conceived in terms of abstract geometries of distance, direction, size, shape, or volume (Gieryn 2000: 465) it mainly concerns nomothetic or quantitative approaches indebted to universal laws of function and efficiency that tend to generalize across individual instances of spatial observation in search of commonly applicable laws of spatial organization (Crang 1998: 100-101; Unwin 2000: 26). In this understanding, ‘space’ used to refer to an uninhabited abstraction, in the sense of a ‘container,’ or seen as a sphere or domain (Escobar 2001: 141). However, as Clifford Geertz observed, “no-one lives in ‘the world-in-general’” (qtd. in Hirsch 1999: 671). Space is perceptibly organized through spatial relations such as distribution, circulation, division, partitioning and enclosure (Soja 1987: 291; Schein 1997: 662) that subject it to intellectual order and to the authority of an ordering institution (Crang 1998: 104). The idea of abstract order and its social implications prompted Henri Lefebvre, one of the most influential theoreticians of space, to attribute space to a realm of ideology that imposes upon place (Unwin 2000: 25). The notion of order and authority presupposes an ordering mind, an author of space, which in the case of socially constructed spaces is usually collective. To me, especially the auctoriality and its expression in specific spatial structures provide clues to the emplotment of space. Therefore, similar to the present-ing of the past through interested

narratives of collective memory, the place-ing of space through particular sites of memory relies on spatial practices that make manifest the vital concerns of a specific group. Yet while the subjects within the groups that produce space(s) are spatially related, they are also spatially disciplined by the boundaries that delimit an exclusive domain (cf. Schein 1997: 662). Space is realized through appropriation and use, domination and control, accessibility and distancing (Unwin 2000: 17-18). Investing abstract space with a historical significance that serves to underscore group identity is one way to use, appropriate and defensively secure 'usable terrain.'

III.1.3 LANDSCAPE

In much geographical spatial analysis, the term landscape has been used as one unit or scale within a spatial spectrum that ranges from locality to district, region, state and eventually global to socio-political formation (Soja 1987: 290). Yet when cultural geographer Donald Meinig summarizes landscape as "an attractive, important, and ambiguous term" (1979: 1) the deliberate simplicity of his statement already suggests the complexity of a cultural analysis that aims to negotiate the dialectics of space and place. Landscape has been approached as a central phenomenon in the "ongoing production and reproduction of place and identity" that allows to link individual and collective spatial experiences. Attempts at defining 'landscape' reverberate with the characteristic features found in the concept of place yet they point beyond spatial singularity. Postmodern geographer Edward Soja aims to transcend the binary opposition of space and place when he suggests to approach space as an interactive system of historic, social and spatial dimensions in and through texts and contexts, representational discourses, and spatial practice (cf. Soja 2003; Unwin 2000: 18). People's engagement with their worlds subjects landscapes to change and thus turns them into social expressions at the same time that it ensures that they remain part of modern lives and realms of agency (cf. Escobar 2001: 146; Hirsch 1999: 671).

When geographer Richard Schein refers to landscape as "a tangible, visible entity, one that is both reflective and constitutive of society, culture, and identity" (1997: 660), he indicates how in cultural geography, conceptualizations of landscape have shifted from the descriptive to the interpretive since Sauer's times. Pierce Lewis retrospectively summarized Sauer's inventorizing understanding of landscape as the result of collective human activity that produces "a layered accumulation of artifacts created by that disorderly accumulation of people we call our ancestors" (1987: 23). J.B. Jackson systematically connected sense of place and sense of time in considering landscape "an archive of *ideas and meaning*" which corroborates human variation and testifies to shared social needs (cf. Starrs 1998: 493;

emphasis mine; Jackson 1994). Similar to the concept of memory, landscape suggests an inherently sensual experience that directs landscape analysis “to encompass as many modes of perception as possible and, equally important, the mental categories through which perception is interpreted” (Upton 1991: 197). Consequently, landscapes are explored as “symbolic fields,” as “maps of meaning,” as “ways of seeing,” or read as texts, based on the assumption that social groups actively and deliberately produce meanings when they construct the world – arranging ideas and relating them within and to space through affective bonds. Landscape emerges as a political and cultural process which is anchored in social life and delimits a space within which to live socially. Thus involved in the processes of constructing social life and tied to the idea of place (cf. Schein 1997: 662), the concept of landscape simultaneously suggests a larger context that emerges from a connection between places: “We cannot have local knowledge of our here and now (place) without a more general set of spatio-temporal references, of how *this* place is connected to other (not present) places, while the encompassing spatio-temporal reference is meaningless unless we are already situated in place” (Hirsch 1999: 671). Such a reading suggests to consider landscape as an “articulated moment in networks that stretch across space” and to comprehensively investigate both geographical connectivity and temporal change (Schein 1997: 662). The combination of spatial and temporal concerns has yielded central insights in historically oriented cultural geography and I contend that the study of sites of memory similarly benefits from such an expansion of its theoretical and methodological scope.

III.2 EMPLACEMENT AND EMPLOTMENT

Because identity is a cultural construct that bears real-life implications, sites of memory must be analyzed with regard to the ways in which “knowledge of the past is constituted and spatialized in public structures” (Flores 1998: 443). Sites of memory in this reading are the points in space where narratives and objects that relate the past converge, where memory becomes so condensed as to metonymically denote a group and/or a worldview. The study of sites of memory thus, in addition to the metaphorical leanings widely displayed in memory studies, needs to account for the processes by which knowledge of the past is transformed into concrete, realized places for group identification, and for the ways that such places are positioned in larger spatial abstractions. I address the processes of materializing and realizing knowledge about the past as emplacement and emplotment. The terms shift the analytical focus from the objects to the processes of realizing past events in public space. Consequently, my case studies investigate the making of monuments as concrete places that derive their power of persuasion not so much from the past events they relate but rather from the strategies of emplacement and emplotment that are used by the memory-makers, often to the exclusion of others.

Emplacement pertains to the physical realization of past events in public space. I use the term to refer to the artifactuality of sites in their material form and their physical dimensions, and also their location, spatial layout and relation to other points in space. Strategies of emplacement used by memory-makers realize knowledge about the past through physical features and spatial practices which can be described and analyzed, they organize space so as to give it economic worth and cultural value. They ultimately aim at establishing a sense of place. Studying emplacement focuses on place and landscape as units of investigation, but also comprises the spatial practices used to convey the meaning of the past to Selves and Others, as e.g. in visits to historic sites or reenactments. When social groups emplace their cultures by appropriating land and setting its boundaries, they both factually administer and symbolically charge the spaces thus acquired in their forms of political, social, and symbolic organization. Thus, they aim to anchor the individual and the collective self to the environment (cf. Sandos 1994: 603). Therefore, the cultural artifacts that make places significant and that designate landscapes comprise material objects as well as discursive acts and spatial practices. Especially in the latter respect, it becomes evident that the physicality of sites is discursively reinforced. I use the term emplotment to refer to this reinforcement, the discursive realization of the past. By introducing the notion of emplotment I mean to make

evident how narratives are used as cultural artifacts through which groups claim tangible locations and how both naming and narration emerge as discursive practices that turn unsigned space into territory where processes of identification literally ‘take place.’ The stories that people tell individually and collectively at/through sites can be investigated as ways of organizing space, both through narrative strategies and through selection of events. They communicate the past to the present through the narrative voices and the roles assigned to characters in commemoration as well as through their respective auctoriality, perspective and tone.¹⁷ When Wallace Stegner maintains that “[n]o place is a place until the things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments” (qtd. in Glassberg 2001: 19; 116) he alludes to the variety of commemorative genres, e.g. origin myth, epic tale, or, possibly, scholarly treatise.

Strategies of emplotment used by memory-makers aim at establishing a sense of self, often by drawing actual and symbolic demarcation lines that define the insiders and outsiders of a group. In its focus on identification, emplotment creates meaning in response to different frames for identification that range from the local to the national and possibly even cosmopolitan. Often, when commemorative discourse emplots the Other as antagonist, historical oppositions are re-constructed that support a present dichotomy of a group’s insiders and its outsiders rather than factually accounting for past divisions and alliances (cf. Flores 1998: 435). Through group-specific interpretations of the past that compete for a site of memory, communities not only seek to find common ground for themselves or claim actual ownership of spaces, but defend their interpretive authority with regard to the discursive realizations of the past. The narratives inspired by historical processes and the spatial imaginations indexed in regional images emerge as deliberate processes of geographical transformation, as strategies of emplacement that originate in divergent discourses on national and ethnic identity. These processes require interpretive approaches and transition to strategies of emplotment. At sites, the ways in which material cultural artifacts are displayed and the explanatory material provided to contextualize it reproduce the discourse that informs the presentation. More generally, material objects and architectural environment provide anchoring points for narratives about the past as well as stages in public space where re-enactments or other forms of ritualized recognition of past events can be performed (cf. Flores

¹⁷ The narrative of the monument sites at El Paso, Alcalde and Albuquerque revolves around a common theme and central character – commemorating ‘the’ Hispanic past in Juan de Oñate. The discourse about the sites relates them ‘intertextually’ and recurs to common topoi in order to justify criticism of the established master narrative of Anglo American history. The patterns used by memory-makers at all three sites either invoke colonial beginnings, successful cultivation and relatively peaceful coexistence with the Native American population; or they juxtapose the established narrative sequence by reference to Hispanic precedence, the neglect of Hispanic history and the significant contribution of Hispanics to building the modern nation; or they bring up the dark side of conquest, lamenting the end of a way of life and an unbroken history of marginalization.

1998: 434). When memory is narrated and enacted in such “external deposits” (Savage 1994: 130), it is emplotted through the relations between such places within larger spatial contexts.

III.3 UNITS OF INVESTIGATION: SITE – MONUMENT – LANDSCAPE

III.3.1 SITES OF MEMORY

French historian Pierre Nora offered a very open definition for sites of memory as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (Nora 1996: xvii).¹⁸ At first sight, their symbolic dimension moves them towards the classical understanding of sites as mnemonic devices – *topoi* or *loci memoriae* (Yates 1966) – that lead to knowledge about the past because they provide images that help us remember. Nora took time and space as fundamentally different parameters of experience. Accordingly, while history to him is temporal knowledge of the past constructed through events, memory is spatial knowledge of the past that is realized in sites (Nora 1989: 22). The oppositional ways of knowing the past are inscribed in sites of memory through an intricate interplay of memory and history, simultaneously accessible through concrete sensual experience and through most abstract intellectual elaboration and available to the specialist as much as to the amateur. The binarism of history/memory is underscored by a series of further oppositions: for Nora, sites operate on a continuum from individual instance of commemoration to the collective/ed archive called heritage. They intertwine the individual with the collective and thence attain a normative dimension as they symbolically relate phenomenon and system (1989: 18-19).

Despite the analytical binarism, in Nora’s understanding, sites of memory are both substance/material/place and performance/event/symbol and can thus take hybrid and highly mutant forms (Nora 1989: 19). Although potentially equipped with physical presence, a specific meaning, and their particular histories, for Nora sites primarily refer to their own origins as interested articulations of a shared past. Understanding sites as essentially self-referential phenomena of commemoration, he downplayed their reference to historical *realia* and set sites of memory apart from the concept of historic sites. Nevertheless, his definition agrees with the fundamental proposition of public history that without the presence of sites as memory’s instruments, the past would be irrecoverable (Lowenthal 1975: 24).

¹⁸ Nancy Wood underscores the symbolic reading of sites in her paraphrasing of Nora’s definition; she interprets sites as the quintessentially symbolic (rather than material) products of human or temporal agency that constitute the symbolic repertoire of a community (1994: 124).

Owing to their self-referentiality, hybridity, and fluidity, sites of memory have invited postmodern approaches. Observing how especially material sites (and the commemorative discourses that revolve around them) tend towards stability with regard to reference and signification, I suggest to read them spatially in order to foreground the entanglement of the temporal and the spatial implications of commemorative practices which ‘take place’ in the shared space of a community and to explore the circulation of meanings with a focus on connectivity and network rather than linear causation. As they paradigmatically incorporate intellectual abstraction, social practice and lived experience, emphasis on the spatial aspects of commemoration offers means to disentangle the symbolic and material and suggests to investigate sites of memory as real-and-imagined places in Soja’s sense. A spatial approach allows to explore and sketch the relationship between the discrete phenomenon, the “significant entity” or site, and the larger commemorative construct which Nora calls heritage of a community and thus to arrive at a better understanding of the processes of signification that characterize a community’s culture of commemoration.

When sites make abstraction available to experience, in other words, when they materialize discourse, as in the instance of monuments, the tension of temporal and spatial forms of knowledge by which a community of memory constructs a shared past is activated. The most common relational practice that establishes this further category of ‘mystic chords’ is narration. The relation between discrete instance and relational network is achieved by narration, the symbol relies on the grammar (signifier / signified) of a culturally specific plot. Therefore, at sites of memory the past is not only emplaced, it is also emplotted. Understanding sites as social discourse and cultural narration opens to investigation a wide array of cultural artifacts by which spaces are encoded. It ranges from narratives about the past to commemorative performances to media such as material objects and visual representations in exhibits, films, or monuments, and to institutions like museums or officially designated and sanctioned historic sites (Möckel-Rieke 1998). The story-ing of places already suggests that the emplotment of the past in commemorative practice can be translated to the emplacement of memory in sites.

As places in which narratives of the past and the self (or, memory and identity) are made concrete and experiential, sites not only compete with temporal referents to narratives of the ethnic group or of national history, they also become testing grounds for these very abstractions. Because sense of history and sense of place are reciprocally entangled at sites of memory in a spatial overlay of history and memory whereby “we attach histories to places, and the environmental value we attach to a place comes largely through the historical

associations we have with it” (Glassberg 2001: 8), sites move closer to being memory themselves rather than representing memory.

In short, sites materialize social discourse and the discourse contextualizes them in systems of cultural signification. From this angle, sites of memory become normative representations of the past which communicate the value system of a group. They emplace the guidelines along which individuals may construct their identity in the space shared by a group and simultaneously put individuals in their place within the social system (cf. Glassberg 2001: 116). The discursive, symbolic, and normative dimensions of sites of memory resonate with the abandoned paradigms of the myth and symbol school and thus fell on fertile ground in American Studies (cf. Garber, Franklin, and Walkowitz 1996; Hebel 2003). In this, sites of memory indicate ways in which scholarship informed by tenets of the cultural turn can be meaningfully and successfully applied to concerns formerly exclusively claimed by historiographically oriented scholarship. When Glassberg contends that “places are (re)made by attaching memories to them” (2001: 123), he reminds us that the memories which groups attach to places and the historical associations they evoke in their individual members are in a constant process of valuing space: by turning places into sites of memory, spaces are supplied with anchoring points for identities. Thus intentionally attaching significance to places represents the “will to remember” that Nora considered a prerequisite for sites of memory (1989: 19) and challenges Nora’s opposition of sites of memory and historic sites.

Through sites, thus, memory is inscribed both in discourse and in landscape, prompting anthropologist Richard Flores to move from Nora’s dichotomies towards cultural geographical conceptions of place with his concept of “memory-place” (1998: 442). Memory-places emerge when ‘real,’ tangible places – historic or geographic sites – are imbued with the power to communicate and authenticate specific versions of the past:

Examining the semantic force of memory-place allows me to explore how collective memory is semiotically grounded in geographic sites, providing physical and spatial locations upon which social meanings and concomitantly, social identities, are fabricated. As such, collective memories, disguised as the workings of historical discourse, are spatially and physically embedded in geographically fixed sites of public history. Memory-place is critically linked to practice, emerging from and within the concrete relations of social power that inform the social construction of meaning. (1998: 429)

Sites thus provide a socializing narrative that is both a result of and constitutive for a culture. Furthermore, they emerge as much from social discourses fixed to public space and the multiple layers of historical texts contained in them as from the silences created by a selective association of discourses and places. At (and through) sites, groups compete over primacy, authority, and authenticity in public space and struggle over particular places as condensations

of landscapes of memory that serve to authenticate (or dispel) actual claims to identity and land or elevate a subordinated group to appropriate recognition. At sites of memory, the past is not discussed but apotheosized, selectively authenticating one particular narrative of a past event (cf. Flores 1998: 442). Reading sites as memory-places demonstrates how places and landscapes function as memory rather than its representation. Therefore, while sites of memory are vital elements of cultural history, they are also “critical places for the politics of history” (Appadurai and Breckenridge qtd. in Flores 1998: 429). (Memory-)Places function as the instruments by which spaces are ideologically charged through meaning and practice. The concrete and tangible is invested with cultural meaning, creating locations wherein interpretations of the cultural self are contained or sought. At the same time, the cultural artifacts retain their reference to the lived experiences that produce them in the first place, and it is this confluence of the real and the imagined that also must concern the study of sites of memory, as Johnson reminds us: “If memory is conceived as a recollection and representation of times past, it is equally a recollection of spaces past where the imaginative geography of previous events is in constant dialogue with the current metaphorical and literal spatial setting of the memory-makers” (2004: 320). Sites of memory – whether as ‘spaces past’ (Johnson 2004) or as ‘memory-places’ (Flores 1998) – stake and stabilize the grounds for remembering. Sites of memory, as will be shown in more detail below, by virtue of their function as landmarks of a remembered geography underscore the spatiality of memory in their physical distribution across the land (cf. Johnson 2004: 321-23).

III.3.2 MONUMENTS

Monuments constitute a specific, material category of sites of memory as they, unlike historic sites, are not necessarily evolving from the historical ground they inhabit but are erected with the explicit purpose of commemoration, realizing in paradigmatic fashion Nora’s “will to remember.”¹⁹ This also implies that monuments are deliberately invested with meaning, in contrast to historic sites where the passing of time contributes to the significance and

¹⁹ The will to remember – or commemorative attitude – also informed Danto’s distinction of monument and memorial. For the purposes of my argument here I distinguish monuments from historic sites on the one hand, and from a metaphorical understanding of sites of memory on the other. Materiality, emphasis on place and the articulation of identity emerge as the central features that characterize a monument. Monuments are no longer perceived as merely authoritative emanations of official versions of the national past but increasingly as partial and interested articulations of heterogeneous pasts – i.e., as sites of memory. Thus, monuments are strategically emplaced as representations whereby group-specific objectives of commemoration are anchored in shared space. This becomes evident when minorities claim monuments to express their perspectives on ethnic pasts, simultaneously assuming agency through display and performance of particular forms of commemoration. That such claims remain yet bound to the ideological implications of the commemorative genre – in other words, that the motives of commemoration are never pure (Young 1993: 2) – will be demonstrated in the case studies.

interpretation of past events and where divergence of interpretation is fostered by change over time. Meaning is dependent on a commemorative program which entails ideological purposes and cultural principles that determine the narrative to be realized in design guidelines or decisions about the location of a monument (cf. Savage 1994: 138; 140).²⁰ As spatial markers of collective memory, monuments visibly link individual places to larger cultural contexts according to the rules of a “commemorative grammar” which are inherently social and central to the struggle over cultural authority (Savage 1994: 131). Public monuments stabilize collective memory – a cultural phenomenon that is “dispersed, ever changing, and ultimately intangible” – in enduring material form as “highly condensed, fixed and tangible sites” (Savage 1994: 130). When they personify past achievement in historic figures which are turned into allegories for the cohesion and solidarity of a group, they not only give a concrete form to temporal abstractions but also intertwine the individual and the collective across time in Nora’s sense and thus challenge the power of death and forgetting (Nora 1989: 19).

Monuments are both mnemonic devices and didactic representations, they help us remember at the same time that they “teach us our recollections” (Kammen). In monuments, historical complexity is reduced to postulated connections across time and space which are made accessible to individual experience in their materiality and spatiality. Monuments present the acts and represent the agents of memory; they produce the particular interpretations of the past important to a defined group and function “as a register of a community’s shared feeling, experiences, and responses” (Morrison qtd. in Watts 1994: 80). Thereby and vice versa, they also help to further define and consolidate a group: Monuments are vital elements in the construction of identity because they serve as material manifestations to acknowledge and legitimize “the very notion of a common memory, and by extension the notion of the people who possessed and rallied around such a memory” (Savage 1994: 130). While it allegedly ‘educates about’ history, a monument offers evidence of the interests of the group that is able to commission it; it testifies to the power structures that inhere in its spatial

²⁰ The dimension of monuments as “mediating devices” (Savage 1994: 130) for culturally shared assumptions was first made productive by scholars working in Material Culture Studies in the late 1970s, a field where research concerns and methodologies of American Studies, social history, cultural geography, folklore studies, and architectural histories intersected; cf. Schlereth 1983: 237, 240. Material Culture Studies investigate the ideas and ideologies, values and identities communicated in the multiple ways cultural objects link (past) events to present, lived experience. Prown (1982) offers a succinct and adaptable definition of material culture as “the study through artifacts of the beliefs (values, ideas, attitudes, assumptions) of a particular community or society at a given time” (1) and further argues that the difference that artifacts make lie in their tangibility that allow “our senses make affective contact with senses of the past” in addition to approaching to the past intellectually (5). The renewed emphasis on the particular, vernacular and regional as well as on interaction and narrative brought about by the cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences strengthened investigations of the place of objects within the ‘webs of significance’ that individuals and groups spin for themselves, even though material culture rather remained the concern of specialists (cf. Schlereth 1983: 241; Wise 1979).

and social contexts (cf. Savage 1994: 135-36). The capability to realize memories in this way and thus make a particular collectivity real and credible is a sign of cultural privilege; it entails the erasure of rival collectivities (Savage 1994: 140-43). In their property as “public representations of a place,” monuments not only celebrate insiders’ sense of place but “also consist of images *directed to outsiders* that can affect how local residents perceive where they live” (cf. Glassberg 2001: 117; emphasis mine) and, by inference, who they are. Monuments are cultural artifacts that impart cultural significance and thus ‘make places’ through location, reference and design. In strategically intermingling sense of history, sense of place and sense of self, they serve to highlight uniqueness and communicate agency.

Monuments, like sites of memory in Nora’s sense, require a discourse as the commemorative context that unites yet also contains separate entities in a differentiated network of collective memory (Nora 1989: 23). In order to function properly as commemorative structures, their commemorative contextualization in culture and space relies on “invisible threads” (Nora 1989: 23-24; 1996: xvii) or “mystic chords” (Kammen 1991). Monuments and commemorations cultivate imagined landscapes that overwhelm the terrain of other cultural systems (Halbwachs); because they postulate (dis-)connections and relations, they participate in a politics and geography of inclusion and exclusion (cf. Osborne 1998: 452). Monuments not only mark and delimit a specific geographic place as a singularity of spatially condensed commemoration, they transform places into nodes within a texture of reference where spatial, social and temporal dimensions intersect and whose multiple relations form a network of cultural significance.

III.3.3 LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY

The new geographers consider landscape as “not only a ‘thing’ built by human hands [...] but also as a theoretical construct, with certain ontological and epistemological assumptions and ramifications” (Schein 1997: 662; cf. also Crang 1998: 14). Therefore, cultural landscapes can be imagined as semiotic networks where sites of memory function as nodes in sometimes physically discontinuous, yet always continuously imagined, discursive space; they are basically landscapes of memory from the outset. Landscapes of memory originate in the spatial as much as in the temporal imagination of a group; they reflect processes of symbolic transformation of place and space to site and landscape of memory and allow to reconceive historical representations as symbolic histories. Landscapes of memory provide commemorative context for sites of memory, e.g. for monuments, and are in turn constituted by these sites; by implication they can be expanded when similar sites are related in and through space.

Common ground (for commemoration) arises from perceptions of place shared among individuals in dialogue and social interaction (cf. Flores 1998: 443). As groups use their environment for cultural purposes, they organize space based on their sense of cohesion and on the ideologies shared by the group in the interest of building community and securing identity, often sharply delineated by the scope of collective memories: “Understood as a material moment in a recurring flow of information/ideals/actions/power, the cultural landscape exists as a crucial point in and of power, as a place where action can contribute to, as well as be constricted by, the ideals that cohere the discursive network” (Schein 1997: 676). Over time, the knowledge about the past mediated through sites accumulate in multiple layers of historical narratives. Consequently, the meanings different groups assign to sites are often perceived as contradictory and conflictual, and the incongruence ignites controversy. As memory makers are found both in dominant and in minority groups, the meaning and significance of symbolically charged spaces of commemoration such as ancestral homelands or places held sacred or in special esteem by a group has political implications as well. (cf. Chidester and Linenthal 1995). Debate about the significance of commemorative space often turns into a veritable fight about the rights of cultural minorities and indigenous peoples to recognition and participation, as many ethnographies of place have demonstrated (cf. Feld and Basso 1996; Hirsch and Hanlon 1995; Flores 1998). While sites transform shared physical space into networks of places, or landscapes of memory, the competing meanings that are attached to the same spaces result in “overlapping systems of signs” (Flores 1998: 442) which overcode the places of memory in a competition for authority and dominance. Rather than result in a “history in multiple voices” that unveils the history of the larger unit, e.g. the nation, as that of an invented and symbolic entity, as Nora predicted (1996: xxiv), the construction of landscapes of memory partakes in the politics of memory and public space that determine which and whose memories will be attached to a place and within which larger spatial entity it will be suspended.

My study shows how individual places are imbued with (antithetical, often highly conservative) meanings of the past and thus turned into sites that evoke larger landscapes of memory. They situate the places and the meanings attached to them within ever-changing constructions of ethnic and national identity. The immediate mental landscape within which they are set to operate is the American Southwest. Yet the inventions and interpretations of the past anchored in these places and spaces also point to further landscapes of memory, and to other webs of significance: they evoke the frontier or the border, Indian country or the *Hispano* homeland, the ‘Land of Enchantment,’ mythic Aztlàn, or the borderlands.

IV SPATIALIZING AMERICAN MEMORIES: FRONTIERS, BORDERS, BORDERLANDS

The old frontier has gone, but the Spanish Borderlands remain, still expanding and more important than ever.

(Worcester 1976: 18)

The narratives told through the sites dedicated to the memory of Oñate draw on evocative spatial images to represent temporal processes. As the debates about the sites indicate, they concern both the articulation of separate ethnic identities and their relation to constructions of national identity. I therefore propose to read them as interpretations of historic experience in the region which claim embeddedness within ‘American memory,’ that is for the ways in which they emplace relations of difference and/or belonging with regard to the nation.

Certainly, the terms ‘frontier’ and ‘border’ connote the most common strategies of emplacement. Both terms entered the discourse of American historiography around the turn of the twentieth century and they both employ spatial images to signify the temporal and spatial disjunctures in the regional past. While they signify the dividing force of cultural encounter, in historiography they have also come to function as overarching paradigms to account for the national past. Building on Turner’s seminal proclamation of the frontier as the dividing line between settled land and unlimited wilderness, common usage tends to subsume all processes of cultural encounter and social change, be they experienced by Spanish colonizers and Mexican nationals in northern Mexico or by Anglo American migrants to the (South-)West under the term ‘frontier.’ With regard to the consecutive occupations and transformations of the Southwestern landscape by Native peoples, Spanish, Mexican and Anglo Americans, such usage seems justified and, subsequently, the history of Oñate’s exploration – the first large-scale revision of New Mexican history – has been alternately approached through the terms ‘frontier’ and ‘border.’ Yet despite their semantic proximity, I suggest a differentiated use of the ‘frontier’ and ‘border’ based on qualitative differences in the historic processes of encounter: I want to re(de)fine geographer Marvin Mikesell’s differentiation of an Anglo “frontier of exclusion” and a Hispanic “frontier of inclusion” (Weber 1986: 72; Mikesell 1960: 65) by emphasizing the ideological and practical differences in the political confrontations between colonizers and colonized during Anglo American and Hispanic colonization, respectively. In this reading, I reserve the expression ‘frontier’ for Anglo American westward expansion and refer to the Hispanic experience in the Southwest as a ‘border’ history. The notion of frontier determines lines of separation along which communities and cultures can be differentiated and bounded, thus separated and

territorialized, frozen in time and fixed in space. Discourses of the frontier are therefore discourses that are founded upon exclusion and perpetuate difference. Significantly, the term frontier resists linguistic maneuvers that aim to semantically expand it in order to connote a more extended space that allows for cultural change beyond the binary opposition firmly established by the idea of frontier. On the other hand, as already evident in the composite term ‘border-lands,’ the concept of ‘border’ creates a space for exchange between and mutual transformation of societies comparable to Pratt’s concept of the contact zone (cf. Pratt 1992; Wood 2000: 260-61; Vélez-Ibáñez 1996). With the territorial consolidation of the United States and Mexico and the determination of the political boundary separating the two American nation-states, the rhetoric of frontier and border as dividing lines had mostly exhausted itself. However, the terms live on as ideologically charged constructs in cultural imaginations, a legacy of conquest that complicates life in the borderlands.

While Turner (1893) had declared the frontier a “*meeting* point between civilization and savagery,” he continued to use the frontier concept to indicate a unidirectional, linear and rather “impermeable *divide* and boundary” (qtd. in Alvarez 1995: 457; emphases mine) that separated the unknown from the known, the primitive from the complex, civilized Self from savage Other. In this image, the frontier was an expression of the dynamic vitality and vigorous expansion of the U.S. as a nation, and beyond this frontier lay inert wilderness awaiting transformation. Processes of social and cultural transformation were conceivable only as forging a novel national culture ‘on’ the frontier which inevitably led to erasure – the ultimate exclusion – of the indigenous cultures of conquered groups (cf. Weber 1986: 73, 77). In the historiography of the United States as well as in popular culture, the frontier as a dividing line between expanding national and receding indigenous spaces has become an image of cultural integration into the nation that signals American-ness and secures models for collective identification in a pluralist nation.

Superficially, Spanish colonization of the Southwest resembles Anglo westward expansion. Beginning with the silver bonanzas in the Sierras around the mid-sixteenth century colonization occurred “as a continuous northward expansion spanning three centuries” (Jones 1979: viii). Also, it seemed that during the initial phase of Spanish colonial history the border rather than the center of New Spain functioned as “the creator of Mexican culture and Mexican allegiance,” because it was there that different groups “merged into a hybrid culture, clearly Hispanic but equally clearly a subtype” that suggested ethnic recomposition along the lines of Turner’s frontiersmen (Weber 1986: 78). Seeking further commonalities that plausibly anchor the Mexican north within the frontier paradigm, historians associated *norteño* culture with the love of liberty, self-reliance and a rugged and pragmatic form of

individualism (Weber 1986: 74).²¹ The social peculiarities of the Mexican north were taken as evidence to justify exceptionalist perceptions of the region similar to those which guided imaginations of the Southwestern United States.²²

Notwithstanding the commonalities with Turner's frontier, upon closer scrutiny Spanish northward expansion displays characteristically different administrative and demographic properties that suggest to consider it a border (zone) rather than a frontier (line): The central colonial government organized and controlled an administrative boundary comprised of strategically planned settlement types such as military *presidios*, religiously motivated *missiones*, and administrative *villas*. Spanish communities during the border phase were built by settlers who had been recruited and granted land and status in compensation for their colonizing efforts. Thus, the border was no safety valve for population pressure but a structured colonial enterprise; the availability of land offered opportunity and individual advancement in exchange for accountability towards the central authorities (cf. Cummins & Cummins 2000: 237). During the colonial era, Mexican civilization symbolically and practically sprung from the administrative center rather than from the margins of the colonial empire. Furthermore, the cultural impact attributed to the gradually northward shifting border on Mexican national identity and thence the symbolic significance of northern New Spain is characteristically less pronounced than that attributed to the precipitous westward rush of the frontier during the phase of U.S. expansion (Weber 1986: 77). Having lost the mysterious luster of a mythic *Eldorado* after the era of exploration, the north was neither seen as a redemptive space or 'garden' nor did it become "the source of the Mexican national type" (Weber 1986: 79n65). Rather than inspire myths about the beneficial impact of the 'border experience' on the nation, the north remained an "an almost forgotten historical world" in Mexican culture, too underpopulated and too peripheral to inspire images comparable to the myth of the West in the United States (Weber 1986: 79). As a cultural landscape, then, the Mexican north lost one matrix of symbolization, giving room to alternate imaginations.

²¹ Cummins and Cummins supply an argument for northern Mexico's "strong support for liberalism in the nineteenth century and for the revolution in the twentieth" (2000: 241; 237) when they point to the isolation from colonial and imperial centers that made settlers interdependent across class lines in basically self-reliant border communities.

²² Trans-border interaction and social relations within the border zone put New Mexicans of both sides into an uncomfortable position: Following Mexican Independence in 1821 and owing to the proximity to the United States, exchange across the international border called the loyalty to Mexico into question because it was seen as contributing to Americanization and thus corrupting the national character (Weber 1986: 79). Yet in the same vein, after 1848 Anglo American administrators mistrusted the loyalty of the annexed Southwest towards the United States, thus facilitating the treatment of Hispanics throughout the territorial period as "foreigners in their native land" (Weber 1986: 80) and enabling biased individuals and institutions steeped in xenophobia to deny Hispanics equal opportunities. Thus forcing them as a group to the bottom rungs of U.S. society, the frontier emerged as a practice and an icon of marginalization (Alvarez 1995: 451).

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the conflicts and imperial rivalries between Spain and England were translated to the Americas. U.S. American expansionist designs employed a deterministic and evolutionist frontier rhetoric that reinforced claims to hemispheric U.S. supremacy, combined with Hispanophobia and racism in a negative portrayal of Hispanic achievement: Spanish colonial administration was discredited as marred by misgovernment, and the significance of historical actors was tainted by the Black Legend that summarily characterized Spanish colonials as “unusually cruel, avaricious, treacherous, fanatical, superstitious, cowardly, corrupt, decadent, indolent, and authoritarian” (cf. Weber 1992: 336-39). During the nineteenth century, the Mexican north was linked to a declining European power and thus vulnerable to the rapidly expanding and aggressively modernizing United States (cf. Sandos 1994: 602). Incoming Anglo Americans who competed for political and economic power with autochthonous elites in region could resort to established patterns of encounter with the colonial Other: Like the various Indian groups that had been forced to give way to westward expansion, Hispanics and their institutions were treated as obstacles to civilizational progress to be inevitably erased by a dynamic frontier society. The negative assessment of the Spanish colonial past justified an attitude of social and cultural superiority and legitimized economic discrimination in the U.S. American territorial present. Eventually, it also contributed to an Anglo American bias of frontier historiography. Seen from this angle, with regard to its historical setup as well as with regard to its internal dynamics and popular significance the Spanish border appeared as the margin of a colonial empire – and definitely not the cutting edge of imperialist expansion.

Against these biases and patterns of marginalization historian Herbert Eugene Bolton wrote his history of the Spanish Borderlands (1921) as the distinctive history of Spanish empire rather than as the prelude to American settlement of the (South)West (Cummins & Cummins 2000: 232). Bolton recovered the Spanish Borderlands as a period of colonial American history in its own right (Worcester 1976: 15), tracing the Spanish past in North America through extensive archival research and meticulous editions of original sources as well as in institutional histories and biographies. He pioneered and promoted the study of the significance of the border region as a “historical bridge” between Anglo and Latin America (Griswold de Castillo 1984: 199) and placed it in the wider context of a history of the Americas, *The Epic of Greater America* (1932) (cf. Weber 1986: 68). Bolton “insisted that understanding Spain’s role in North America was essential to understanding American history” (Weber 2000). To this end, he offered a substantiated counter-narrative to the national tale of expansion that rested on Turner’s Frontier Hypothesis. Assuming a western American perspective, he rewrote the significance of the Southwest and Far West as the land

defined by the first borders rather than the last frontier. When he recontextualized colonial Spanish figures in a ‘white legend’ that emphasized the heroism of Spanish exploration, colonization and missionizing as well as the efficiency of Spanish colonial institutions (cf. Weber 1992: 355; Weber 1986: 69), Bolton tended towards a “glorification of things Hispanic” (Cummins & Cummins 2000: 231). In their efforts to counter widespread Hispanophobia Boltonians have often been found to disregard the Native American cost of conquest (Cummins & Cummins 2000: 231; Weber 1986: 67). While their Hispanophilic, even Hispanocentric approach fundamentally changed the historiography and popular imagination of the Southwest (Weber 1992: 353; Cummins & Cummins 2000: 233), it also retained an exceptionalist and inherently ethnocentric perspective.²³ This attitude also contributed to the increasing marginalization of the Boltonians in American historiography, especially with the rise of social history, despite their voluminous production of archival research and editorial work on original documents.²⁴ To the present day, many of the issues that prompted the articulation of the Spanish Borderlands paradigm await resolution and popular perceptions of the Hispanic past remain caught between celebration and condemnation, echoing the turn-of-the-century opposition between the Hispanophilia of the Bolton school and the Hispanophobia of the so-called Black Legend history (Weber 2003: 95).

Bolton’s approach nevertheless established the idea of the border(lands) as a zone of interaction, facilitating processes of intercultural crossings and circulation as well as resistance and negotiation (cf. Saldívar 1997: ix; Wood 2000: 262), in contrast to the leveling force attributed to the ‘frontier.’ Bolton approached the problem of racial and cultural mixture so disconcerting to his contemporaries as a constructive cultural and personal encounter, distancing himself from the pejorative judgment of many contemporaries who regarded the

²³ Echoes of political and environmental determinism and of Anglo supremacy ring in his assessment of “Spanish character” (cf. Cummins & Cummins 2000: 232, Hurtado 1995: 166) which he explained by reference to the staying power of a uniform Spanish absolutism throughout the empire that allegedly stifled individual initiative and institutional transformation. Furthermore, although he unfolded a different past, his scholarship remained indebted to the assumptions of national history, affirming Anglo democracy, liberty, individualism and mobility in juxtaposition with the absolutism of Spanish colonial society (Weber 1986: 69-70).

²⁴ Up until the 1970s and 1980s, Borderlands historians produced a wealth of local histories, institutional biographies, as well as works investigating Spanish-Indian relations or the rivalries between colonial powers and thus continued to inscribe the Spanish/Mexican past into North America history in Bolton’s tradition. They contributed to the development of Chicano historiography in their concern to give a voice to the descendants of the Spanish colonists and create for them “a sense of identity and cultural homogeneity” (Weber 1986: 70). Yet they also overemphasized the homogeneity of the Hispanic experience at the expense of regional and social variations, thus trading old myths for new ones. The tension between national and minority history became highlighted in the 1970s with Bannon’s *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821* (1970) or with Worcester’s comprehensive catalogue of ‘Hispanic contributions’ to national history in his “The Significance of the Borderlands to the United States” (1976).

mestizo population in the Southwest as “degenerate mongrels” (Weber 1992: 337). While in practice Bolton was more interested in the impact of Spanish colonizers on the borderlands than vice versa, he acknowledged in principle that through interaction and exchange people on both sides of the border underwent cultural transformation (Weber 1986: 73). His thinking opened a space for *mestizaje* where populations engage in long-ranging and simultaneous processes of “cultural creation, accomodation, rejection, and acceptance” (Vélez-Ibáñez 1996: 8-9; cf. also Wood 2000: 260). His notion of the border alludes to a social system that facilitates inclusion and allows to spatialize belonging (Alvarez 1995: 457). The Spanish Borderlands offer a paradigm that accommodates the various regional pasts of Hispanic Americans and locates them within the nation both geographically and symbolically.

IV.1 LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY I: THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

The large-scale territorial reorganization that resulted from the military confrontation between Mexico and the United States left its imprint on the spatial and cultural imagination of the region: During the decades following the Mexican American War (1846-1848), Anglo Americans sought ways to legitimize territorial expansion by culturally integrating the militarily annexed Southwest into national mythology as an indispensable part of U.S. American identity. Both in intellectual and in popular discourse, Southwestern times and spaces were recast in the terms of a frontier narrative. In a rhetoric that emphasizes ‘firsts,’ the ‘deserts’ of the Southwest appeared as places of newness and growth and were thus constructed as genuinely American places of emergence and origin, or, as Gersdorf observed, as “the symbolic space in which America constructs and reconstructs itself as a nation” (2000: 412). Framing the Southwest as yet another Promised Land allowed for a reappraisal of the cultural significance of the westward movement. It toned down the aggressive thrust of Manifest Destiny and transformed it in the more benign terms of an Agrarianism that regarded the West in general and the Southwest in spiritual terms as a redemptive space, a mythical “Garden of the World” (cf. Smith 1950: 4). Offering historical depth and antiquity, the region seemed the ideal locus for a regenerative variation on the rhetoric of progress, foregrounding historical continuity (in the face of military disruption) and harmonious multicultural coexistence (in the face of ethnic displacement). The cultural invention of ‘the Southwest’ as an exceptional place within the national space of the United States confirmed the belief that the project of ‘America’ could be realized and that in the Southwest the quest for cultural independence from Europe had found its place of origin as well as completion. Playing on the paradoxical theme of imperialist nostalgia, the Southwest offered a living laboratory for cultural evolution to demonstrate that western technological civilization need not necessarily

imply the destruction of autochthonous cultures. In the Southwest, so-called prehistoric and archaic societies strikingly coexisted with industrializing America. Still, imperialist nostalgia also sought to salvage regional customs and traditions in order to preserve a redemptive space in face of the destructive forces unleashed by modernizing America. A yearning for pastoral values and the critique of an overly commercialized society were projected onto the apparently undisrupted, culturally productive traditions and communities of the Southwest. Weber argues that around the turn of the twentieth century the (reinvented and sanitized) Hispanic past was embraced and recovered as “an acceptable source of tradition and continuity for Anglo Americans” (1992: 342). The Spanish past assumed verisimilitude because it invoked the force of history. Yet owing to the processes of displacement and disempowerment, the ‘force of history’ had also conveniently “reduced the influence of [the region’s] Hispanic residents [...] It became possible, then, for Anglo Americans to look back at the [New Mexicans’] past, because their descendants posed no challenge to Anglo dominance of politics, commerce, or social life” (342). While factually characterized by processes of cultural invention and commodification of the past, the Southwest emerged in the popular Anglo American vision as a realm of authenticity, inhabited by colorful, timeless peoples and promising individual as well as societal rejuvenation (cf. Estill 2000: 244).

Anglo American appreciation of the vanishing Hispanic tradition resembled the attitudes they displayed towards Native American culture in the nostalgic yearning for purity and cultural authenticity as well as in its denial of co-evalness that firmly associated the Other with an irredeemably lost past (cf. Weber 1992: 341, 343). Resident populations like the *Hispano* homelanders or Native Americans were credited with a special relationship to the land and thus with sustaining distinctive landscapes and places. This matches Glassberg’s observation that regionalist preservation movements of the time tended to romanticize the displaced as repository and guardians of land-based traditions and that intellectual sensibilities anxiously embraced the customary practices of culturally distinct communities hoping thus to stem cultural homogenization (Glassberg 2001:120). Consequently, during the first decades of the twentieth century the Spanish Revival emerged as part of a cultural attitude that intended to stall the destruction wrought on distinctive American regions by the leveling forces of modernization. Its Anglo protagonists invented a multicultural community in the Southwest that realized an ideal nation which they saw endangered by progressive industrialization and urbanization in other regions of the United States (cf. Glassberg 2001: 120; Estill 2000: 246). Yet paradoxically, in New Mexico’s Spanish Revival of the 1920s that was inspired by and in turn promoted the local Fiesta culture, pre-modern longings were associated with progressive visions of civilization. This paradox culminated in the postulate of harmonious tri-cultural

coexistence that has been a resonating trope in discourses which promote the region as a 'Land of Enchantment.' This tri-ethnic myth, as it is commonly referred to today, represents a meta-narrative that was originally designed to stabilize a diverse community and to overcome a frontier rhetoric that cast the land and its indigenous population as dispensable obstacles to progress. However, it also helped to mask the violence of colonial and imperial encounters, to obscure the imbalances of cultural exchange and to naturalize the late nineteenth-century migration of Anglo Americans to the region.

IV.1.1 THE TRI-ETHNIC MYTH

The invented tradition and rhetoric of intercultural harmony that informs the tri-ethnic myth ascribes to ethnicity a "master status that shapes and circumscribes every individual's patterns of social access and interaction" and results in a socio-cultural hierarchy based on a "perception of static, unhybridized categories of Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo" that places "Indians at the bottom, Mexicanos in the middle, and Anglos at the top," as Sylvia Rodriguez observed (1991: 254n19).²⁵ It reveals the evolutionist bias of social science thinking prevalent in the early twentieth century, informed by and supporting the notion of the march of progress on a cultural level, as evident in a period mural at the University of New Mexico's Zimmerman Library.²⁶ The tri-ethnic myth freezes non-Anglo groups both in their cultural development and in time, casting the Anglo population as the only active, dynamic element and discounting the cultural interaction as well as "the significant local history of cultural and racial mixing" (Wilson 1997: 29) that had occurred over the centuries. The ideal of tri-culturality inherent to the Anglo American perspective homogenized the complex multicultural context of the Southwest. Romantically extolling the original inhabitants' relationship with the land, it suppressed any evidence of modernity and exaggerated the separateness of the cultural groups (cf. Wilson 1997: 29). Furthermore, the tri-ethnic myth ignored internal differentiations within ethnic groups and subordinated their respective social

²⁵ In the logic of the tri-ethnic myth, Native Americans were taken as survivals from a 'wild,' definitely pre-historic state of humankind, given their spiritual and economic ties to nature and the land as well as their long-time presence in the region. The agrarian society of colonial Spain with its stratification into peasants and land-lords provided evidence for the next stage in evolution. Historically, while Hispanics added glorious discovery, exploration and settlement to regional history, New Mexican Catholicism, as for example the religious brotherhood of the self-flagellating *Penitentes*, appeared likewise exotic and medieval to Anglo Americans of the early twentieth century, marking Hispanics as a people of the past. The culmination of civilizational achievement was represented by Anglo-American technological progress and scientific enlightenment as well as democratic institutions. Anglo self-perception marked them not just as the people of modernity, but as the people of the future.

²⁶ The commission for the mural envisioned four panels representing "[t]he Indian, showing his work as the artist [...] The Spanish, giving a general idea of their contributions to the civilization in this area in the fields of agriculture and architecture [...] The Anglo, with scientific contributions [...] The union of all three in the life of the Southwest"; cf. <http://elibrary.unm.edu/zimmerman/text/murals.html>

and political interests to the overarching image and commercial slogan of the 'Land of Enchantment.' As Bodine (1968), Rodriguez (1987, 1991, 1998) and more recently Montgomery (2000, 2003) have demonstrated, for those contained in and by it, the tri-ethnic myth increasingly presented a tri-ethnic trap. The particular rhetoric of tri-ethnicity leads to a hegemonic system of boundary drawing and ethnic differentiation akin to the frontier paradigm, delimiting separate ethnicities based on parameters of history and race, but also culture and class (cf. Rodriguez 1991: 254). As the twentieth century progressed, the image of harmonious tri-ethnic coexistence no longer merely endorsed the formulation of an American cultural and historical identity independent of Europe by constructing New Mexico and the Southwest as a redemptive and exceptionalist space. In view of demographic Hispanic majorities and successful Native American reclamation of land and cultural autonomy, tri-ethnicity became a defensive proposition that factually concealed the displacement and exclusion of the Native American and Hispanic populations from positions of cultural, economic, and social status. It entrapped so-called minorities in a hierarchy of cultural prestige that has negatively affected their economic situation because it confined them in convenient stereotypes of Otherness. Such stereotypes both downplayed the internal divisions and diverging interests of ethnic groups and ignored the dynamic of culture change that negatively impacted them economically and socially after annexation and statehood. Having initially facilitated the commodification of New Mexico and the Southwest for the tourist market as a destination with exotic cultures, foreign customs and ancient histories, the tri-ethnic myth increasingly concealed the absolute Anglo control over the symbolic and actual resources of the Southwest (cf. Rodriguez 1987, 1989, 1991).

The exceptionalist imagination of the region was underscored by the dramatic landscape of the Southwest that Anglo American artists and intellectuals had perceived as a sublime space promising access to transcendent values for a multicultural society and thus successful completion of the project of 'America.' Therefore, culturally defining the space of the Southwest as part of or separate from the United States goes to the heart of legitimizing the factual annexation of political territory. Redrawing the boundaries of the nation state in 1848 and 1912 also necessitated expansion of the symbolic boundaries of national culture, a process whose repercussions have enduringly impacted on the present, potentially more thoroughly than military action or even political and economic transformation. The contestations over historical expressions of minority culture reflect a struggle over public space in a region that represents a liminal space between the United States and Mexico. Dominant society still suspects Hispanic Americans, regardless of their geographical situation or ethnic affiliation, of being culturally attached to 'Mexico,' thus making sure they cannot

fully arrive in ‘America.’ Despite the bi-national constitution of the region and the notion of tri-culturality that pervades the image of the Southwest, in the struggles over place, memory, and identity revolving around the Oñate monuments only two models of cultural consensus are juxtaposed – an Anglo American and a Hispanic version of historical narrative and national identity.²⁷ Native American as well as Chicano versions of history and identity are conspicuously absent from the debate. Therefore, the following subchapter discusses strategies by which Hispanics of different political orientation and identification have aimed to include their experience and to carve out a place for themselves in the real-and-imagined spaces of the Southwest – the *Hispano* homeland and Chicano Aztlán.

IV.2 LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY II: HOMELANDS

The concept of ‘homeland’ proposes an inextricable link between the land and the group that inhabits it based on the unity of “a people, a place, and identity with place” (Nostrand 1992: 214). The homeland is considered the perpetual source of livelihood and continuity for the group that claims it and it contains a specific system of signification in material and symbolic culture. Connoting the strongest form of place-attachment, “*identity with place*,” the concept of homeland not just represents collective identity, but the concrete places indexed by it are taken as identity in their symbolizations (Nostrand & Estaville 2001: xv).

While the term has been generously applied to accommodate a spatio-cultural vision that links the idea of culture areas in the Sauerian tradition to the study of place attachment espoused by humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, Michael Conzen prescribes a more cautionary and discriminating usage of the term. He points out that the existence of a discernible socio-cultural group united by a “sense of peoplehood” (Conzen 2001: 268) is a precondition for ‘homeland’ and that in Nostrand’s understanding peoplehood extends mainly to a desire to own, control and belong to the land both politically and culturally. Consequently, homeland becomes a highly partial spatial construct, a “more or less exclusive territory that one indigenous group controls to advance its own cultural goals” (2001: 266). More than just a stage upon which the collective memory of a group’s cultural achievements could be enacted, homeland becomes an existential precondition for the group, its memories and culture. It inspires feelings of (individual) attachment to the land claimed by the group and to the

²⁷ Given the political orientation of the protagonists as well as the passion and anxiety that characterized the debate, the struggle appears to revolve around an even more existential question: whether the past commemorated through the icon of Oñate designated the community of memory that endorsed or opposed it as American or un-American; cf. Montejano 1999: xi.

heritage (and destiny) shared by it that may lead to an imperative to defend the territory.²⁸ Territoriality and loyalty combine to build a community of belonging, expressed in commitment and affirmed through the veneration of iconic landmarks and other cultural symbols in shared cultural practices (Conzen 2001: 252-55). Owing to the duplicity of homeland formations as both produced by and constitutive for communities and their identity/their programmatic symbolism, Conzen urges to investigate such formations with regard to their political, social and cultural ends.

IV.2.1 HISPANO HOMELAND

The concept of a distinct '*Hispano* homeland' was first introduced as the "Hispanic-American Borderland" by cultural geographer Richard Nostrand in the 1970s.²⁹ Nostrand proposed 'homeland' as a cultural understanding of the sense of place espoused by traditional groups and as a critique of the placelessness he perceived as characteristic for contemporary, mainstream American culture (Nostrand & Estaville 2001: xxii). He identified *Hispanos* as a culturally distinct minority, a bilingual *mestizo* population emerging from prolonged cultural exchange, deeply rooted in the traditions of agriculture and folk Catholicism and strongly bound to both the land and the community (1970: 641-44). The limits of this homeland could be traced through specific features of the cultural landscape such as topographic and place names, land use and settlement patterns. In combination with demographics, local culture and history these factors constituted a genuine and distinct *Hispano* culture area.³⁰ Obviously seeking to provide spatial evidence for the impulses of the Spanish Revival during the first decades of the twentieth century, Nostrand's concept displayed an emphasis on rural folk culture – especially in the notion of *Hispano* distinctiveness – and a nostalgic pre-industrial bias.³¹ In his usage, the concept accounts for the processes by which communities are built

²⁸ To Conzen, homelands signify subnational units with a discernible degree of autonomy and sufficient historical depth to allow a distinct ethnogenesis, either through isolation and endogenic culture change or through hybridization. It establishes political institutions in order to exert control over land and resources and to maintain a distinct heritage and an independent destiny. Furthermore, the concept of homeland is connected to territoriality in political and symbolic form which moves it close to separatist movements.

²⁹ Alvar Carlson had called the Rio Arriba the "Spanish-American homeland" in his unpublished dissertation of 1971. To him, a homeland was founded on "a people's ability to acquire, use, and retain land"; Carlson 1971: 22. Cf. also Nostrand & Estaville 2001: xvii, xv; Nostrand 1980: 382.

³⁰ Thus went Nostrand's argument in 1970 (652-61). His thoroughly researched catalogue comprised the *acequia* system of communal irrigation and land grants as well as folk celebrations or linguistic peculiarities like toponyms, specific last names and Castilian survivals (1970: 652-55).

³¹ Montgomery's assessment of northern New Mexican traditions suggests a continuity between Spanish Revival and *Hispano* homeland (2000: 492-95; esp. 494). Especially as applied by Richard Nostrand the term homeland implies a nostalgic return to pre-industrial rural isolates characterized by a stable harmonious order within and non-conflicted coexistence between different ethnic groups. I will offer an example for the problematic implications of Nostrand's reading in Ch. 3.

and consolidated, it is political only insofar as control over the special culture area is concerned (2001: xx). Leaning towards cultural pluralism, the term allows to locate collective identities yet it also relies on cultural difference with regard to heritage, cultural mission and collective awareness.

Despite evidence of cultural exchange and ethnic blending (*mestizaje*), Nostrand's homeland concept reaches its limits where processes of cultural mixing, exchange or assimilation within a multicultural context are concerned. Nostrand's observation that "a striking natural environment has been overlaid through cultural activities to form a place with intense and special meaning for its inhabitants" (Works 1993: 224) disregarded the Pueblo presence and cultural landscape at the same time that it reaffirmed the tri-ethnic mythology in attributing to *Hispanos* the "poeticization of life, personalization of human relationships [...] [and] a serenity that accepts rather than strives to improve" and interpreting them as offering difference in the face of standardization and diversity in the face of conformity that had made New Mexico so attractive for disenchanting refugees from modernization (cf. Nostrand 1970: 661). His *Hispano* homeland thus remains tied to a frontier imaginary as a concept focused on the drawing and stabilizing of boundaries rather than on questioning strategies of ethnic differentiation or even transcending cultural borders.

Notwithstanding these reservations, the idea of 'homeland' promises to reward concerns of the spatial turn because it heightens attention to the particular and the local. On the one hand, it contributes to the investigation of (subjective) sense of place and (collective) imaginations of space when it details how groups establish common ground for themselves through cultural practices and symbolizations of memory. On the other hand, 'homeland' also underscores the legitimacy that social groups derive from their geographical foundation in order to further their interests – and thus participate in discourses about a multicultural America (Conzen 2001: 270). It enables us to see how images of geographical regions – landscapes – express perspectives on the symbolic system – culture – whereby individuals can access and explore cultural self-hood – identity. And vice versa.

IV.2.2 CHICANO AZTLÁN

In contrast to affirmative and nostalgic readings like Nostrand's, both Conzen's call to "include the political dimension of cultural identity" (Conzen 2001: 255) and his definition suggest that the notion of homeland can also imply defensive assertions of a separate ethnic identity, paradigmatically exemplified in the proclamation of Aztlán, the mythic homeland and conceptual rallying ground for Chicanos during the civil rights movement. The programmatic statements made in Alurista's *El Plan Spiritual de Aztlán* (c.1969) evoke Conzen's definition of homeland as a subnational unit with separatist aspirations:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal "gringo" invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny. [...] Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on the bronze continent. Brotherhood [...] makes us a people whose time has come and who struggles against the foreigner "gabacho" who exploits our riches and destroys our culture. With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán. (<http://orgs.sa.ucsb.edu/mecha/mission.html>)

The myth of Aztlán was invoked during the 1960s as an attempt by Chicano activists as well as scholars to recapture wholly the Mexican American past, perceived as rooted in the indigenous history of the Americas (cf. Weber 1992: 356) and including racial mixing and cultural exchange. This "protest-oriented formation" (Gonzales) of Hispanic identity proclaimed continuity with the Native American past. Yet the 'return to Aztlán' by claiming indigeneity produced a new myth at the cost of the conquered and colonized (cf. Bus 2000: 124). This proved especially problematic for interethnic relations in New Mexico: When Chicanos built their identity and sense of place on mestizaje, they literally and indiscriminately incorporated Native American groups. Also, when they legitimated their property claims to contested Southwestern lands through Native American (Aztec) ancestry, through first civilizing impact and by right of current use, they worked against the interest of Pueblo groups who often claimed the same spaces (118). While 'Aztlán' challenged the international border as well as statelines in the Southwest, it retained the concept of boundaries and their ethnic nationalist implications and relied on a static and essentialist homogenization of experience in terms of the Chicano movement (118). Nevertheless, the

concept of Aztlán encouraged historical revision along postcolonial lines. Subsequent scholarship diversified its approaches in order to critically acknowledge the diverse experiences of various groups. As it turned out, the complexity of the Hispanic experience could not be subsumed under either label, Chicano or Hispano. Doing more justice to the full set of experiences were approaches and terminologies that took into account generation, race, class, and gender, as well as political orientation, national affiliation and geographic location (cf. Griswold de Castillo 1985: 134, 135; Weber 1992: 357-58).

Both the *Hispano* homeland and Chicano Aztlán have lost their urgency for academic and popular cultural discourse since approximately the 1980s (cf. Weber 1992: 358). Still, the debate about “a ‘mythic homeland’ for the mythic Hispanos” (Blaut and Rios-Bustamante 1984: 159) remains instructive for the purposes of this study as it reflects the tension between the competing concepts of Hispanic identity found in attachment to place in New Mexico that according to Gonzales ranges from “protest-oriented” to accommodationist designs.³² Perceived under the overarching notion of ‘homeland,’ the monuments to Oñate represent tangible instances of the strategies of emplacement by which cultural constructions of self are tied to the ground. They offer insight into the different ways that boundaries are drawn in New Mexico.

The representations and manifestations of memory ‘on the ground’ are often caught up in entrenched oppositionalities and informed by the specific past experiences of groups and individuals that are inherently non-negotiable. The different labels given the Southwest perpetuate naming as one of the earliest strategies of emplacement and testify to the ongoing attempts to make this precarious space on the margins, on the “narrow strip along a steep edge” (Anzaldúa 1987: 25), habitable. The different regional labels originate in political, cultural and intellectual discourses which explore regional and national affiliation (cf. Griswold de Castillo 1985: 135). They make evident that (and how) the frontiers of exclusion and inclusion which crisscross the transnational, multiethnic borderlands are instrumentalized for ideological purposes and they raise questions of hegemony, contestation, consensus, and reconciliation. Seen as an expression of the desire to belong, the homeland concept allows to appropriately place and meaningfully connect the distinct experiences in the dynamic cultural and geographic space that to some is the Anglo Land of Enchantment, to others the *Hispano* homeland or the Chicano Aztlán. Yet, the confrontation and interplay of perceptions and

³² Blaut and Rios-Bustamante 1984; Hansen 1981. Both *mestizaje* and the notion of ‘homeland’ evoke the separatist concepts of Chicano identity referenced by the mythic Aztlán; in the 1980s, Nostrand was most vocally criticized for his failure to integrate the perspective of Chicano scholarship. Conzen offered a preliminary closure of the debate by suggesting to investigate the uses to which the homeland concept was put (2001: 270-71).

conceptions of cultural space results in a multiplicity and hybridity which is rather characteristic for borderlands. The border-lands emerge as a space that might rather offer reconciliation and better accommodate the diametrically opposed desires for difference and belonging.

IV.3 LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY III: BORDER-LANDS

In retrospect, the emphasis on an inclusive narrative of national experience, its placement in a hemispheric New World context, a transnational perspective and the potential for cultural interaction and *mestizaje* remain as the enduring conceptual legacy of Bolton's Spanish Borderlands. Stimulated by the impending Columbus Quincentennial, in the 1980s the exploration of the Spanish Borderlands as a Spanish, Mexican and U.S. American historical record was central to approaches that sought to explain America's multicultural present through more inclusive histories of the nation's various colonial origins (cf. Weber 2003: 104). Historians of Latin America increasingly focused on the margins of Spanish empire, historians of early Anglo America looked beyond British roots, and historians of the American West extended their scope beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries drawn during the 1850s. Since then the perspective that the nation's early history comprises the stories of the diverse peoples that came to be subsumed later under the boundaries of the nation-state has become a shared assumption (cf. Weber 2003: 89).

The legacy of conquest is as inherent to the U.S.-Mexican border as it is to other international boundaries that separate the territories of abstract entities like nation-states regardless of the previous lived realities of communities, and of the spatial and social organization of the regions they divide. Yet the unequal distribution of power, economic disparity and inequality of the human condition are rarely so evident as along this boundary line. Therefore, the political boundary between the United States of America and of Mexico has gradually assumed exemplary character for the implications of "lines drawn [...] during a colonial era" that extend their political influence across time and throughout the surrounding geographic regions and culture areas (Alvarez 1995: 449). The geopolitical and cultural region that unfolds along the international boundary challenges Bolton's borderlands history to broaden its scope geographically and conceptually, eventually to encompass the approaches and paradigms of interdisciplinary border studies that investigate the impact of boundaries on the societies they separate. In addition to research on the history of the border and its role for U.S.-Mexican relations, on expressions and practices of racism and discrimination along the border, or on the impact of economic boom and decline in the wake of WW II and most recently the *maquiladora* economies (cf. Cummins & Cummins 2000: 242), studies of the

U.S.-Mexican border offered instruments and approaches to explore the origins of pressing social and economic problems and of the conflicting interests along other divides where the so-called first world and third world confront each other (cf. Anzaldúa 1987) or where in Renato Rosaldo's words "the third world continues to extend itself into the first, and the nation-states encroach into territories beyond their borders" (1989). Since the 1970s, trans-border issues of migration, labor, health, settlement or environment were investigated in the context of an expanding and diverse field of historical and social science inquiry that brought together objectives and approaches originating in scholarship with a focus on processes like culture change and cultural conflict, economic disparity, the formation of communities and the articulation of identity (Alvarez 1995: 452).

For Oscar Martinez, the "protracted conflict rooted in the vastly unequal power relationship between Mexico and the United States" has been ongoing since the early nineteenth century (cf. Cummins & Cummins 2000: 243) and thus presents a corollary to imperialism/imperialist expansion. The borderlands emerged as both a region and a "set of practices defined and determined by [the international] border" that were characterized by material and ideational conflict and contradiction (Alvarez 1995: 449). Living in the margins between two nations and cultures, borderlanders must build community in the fissures between two worlds and cope with a reality fractured into different histories, languages, cosmologies, artistic traditions, and political systems that are "drastically counterposed" in the borderlands (Spitta 1993: 75). As anthropologist and border specialist Alvarez observed, "so-called border people are constantly shifting and renegotiating identities with maneuvers of power and submission, and often they adopt multiple identities" (1995: 452). Border crossers indicate the reach of the bi-national borderlands through their spatial behavior and delimit extended communities through their social practice, simultaneously reaffirming and envisioning local and regional historical relations between the U.S. American and Mexican sides (Alvarez 1995: 456). The existence of the border aggravates the difficulties of building communities and asserting identities and necessarily leads to conflicting perspectives on the past, suspended between mythic origins and North American realities (cf. Spitta 1993: 75).

In the words of Calderón and Saldivar, the notion of the border unfolds a space "between first and third worlds, between cores and peripheries, centers and margins" (1991: 7). The actual international boundary was thus transformed into a conceptual, global and local, borderlands. The notion of the border – a dividing line expanded into a contact zone "inhabited by a variety of subjectivities and increasingly hybrid cultures" (cf. Saldivar 1997; Pratt 1992) – became an organizing trope for discourses which aimed to critique established narratives of national historical consensus and sought to provide a "renewed mass cultural

ground” for alternative formulations of identity within a multicultural America (Saldivar 1997: 8). Despite all the predicament of the borderlands, critics and scholars have increasingly abandoned nation-bound models of identity as a basis for political and social unity. Instead, in their search for cultural commonalities they (re)turned to the borderlands as a context for culture and society built on interaction and exchange, as exemplified in the contact zones between Mexican and U.S. societies (cf. Alvarez 1995: 460-61; Weber 1992: 358). The borderlands emerge as a multidimensional field of living and changing social practice as well as a broad cultural framework for the historic experience of Hispanics in the Southwest.

Moreover, as a result of the disciplinary challenges and cultural rearticulations initiated during the civil rights era, borders were reinterpreted as the “conceptual lines of gender, race, class, nation and ethnicity” shifting both the canons and epistemological concerns of studies in culture and society (Alvarez 1995: 460-61). The borderlands concept highlighted the “paradox of literal geopolitical and conceptual boundaries” in a space where individuals, cultures, and ideologies clashed and challenged disciplinary perspectives indebted to social harmony and equilibrium (Alvarez 1995: 448-49). As notions of culture and ethnic identity became increasingly deterritorialized, the border became a spatial referent for the binary oppositions like insiders/outsideers or subjects/objects that had heretofore been used in constructing and maintaining difference and/or belonging. As it conjoined the literal and the conceptual, the border became an icon that spatialized the duplicity of real-and-imagined lines of separation.

The pivotal work by Chicana critic Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), both inaugurated and summarized the captivating metaphorical extensions of the borderlands concept that have since become highly productive for scholarship across the humanities. She famously outlined the concept in her proclamation of the border as “a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge” that primarily produces a borderland of consciousness, “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (1987: 25). Anzaldúa situated borderlands in all contexts where “two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two people shrinks with intimacy” (1987: i; cf. also Durczak 2000: 280). She analyzed and challenged the subordination of subjects contained by the various conceptual lines of classification which are by necessity constantly crossed in the multidimensional life of the actual borderlands (cf. Alvarez 1995: 460-61). Her work challenges epistemologies built on binary oppositions and explores the potential of ‘borderlands’ as a space of resistance to “dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness” (Anzaldúa 1987: 80). The conflicts and divisions of the present call for a

“tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” (1987: 79) in the constitution of subjectivity as well as in approaches to lived experience. Her postmodern statement on Chicana identity links borderlands criticism to the theoretical foundations of transnationalism and globalization (cf. Alvarez 1995: 452).

However, the concept of borderlands and especially the notion of hybridity have been criticized as elusive and mystifying and eventually inappropriate as a tool to account for the ambiguity and multiplicity of lives in the borderlands (Alvarez 1995: 447). Over the past decade, as scholars engaged with the literal and disciplinary boundaries referenced by the borderlands concept, especially the attempts to distill a unified border culture from common experiences along the international boundary have come under scrutiny and criticism. Despite shared antecedents and common problems, the diversity of the Hispanic experience and the articulation of identity also depend on geographic circumstances (urban or rural environment), on the presence or absence of discriminatory rhetoric or racially motivated violence, and on the surrounding Anglo American culture (Griswold de Castillo 1985: 134).³³ Moreover, the border does not constitute a shared experience and lived reality for all Hispanics across the United States. The metaphorical borderlands need to be re-substantiated and tested for their potential as living spaces that offer more comfort and reassurance than Anzaldúa’s inherently alienating, inhospitable liminal space. Forms of accommodation as well as the paradox inherent in the concept remained largely unaccounted for in metaphorical readings of ‘borderlands’: As evident from the negotiations over Hispanic identities at the monument sites in New Mexico, boundaries are as much challenged as affirmed by practices of identification and commemoration in the borderlands. While an attractive term for academic reflection and playfully practiced in popular culture, hybridity is seldom embraced as a principle in political articulations of ethnic identity. Alvarez foregrounds the conceptual dilemma of the cultural and metaphoric borderlands when he contends that “[w]hile colorful, the definition of border culture as a hybrid of Spanish, English, and even Nahuatl was socially misleading. [...] The actual social-cultural processes of communities and the variation of border peoples were obscured by a drive to define and pigeonhole this geographic region into a Wisslerian culture area type” (1995: 451). Apparently, hybridity cannot resolve the predicament of difference that is highlighted through boundary drawing (Campbell 2000: 114; Alvarez 1995: 447).

³³ Griswold de Castillo points to the diversity of Hispanic self-perceptions with regard to race which depend on attitudes in Anglo society and represent one legacy of free or slave-holding states. Likewise, he argues that community formation through cultural and social associations, labor unions, and ethnic newspapers often occurred in response to the derogatory rhetoric of Anglo American media and that the pressures of Americanization were felt differently in urban or rural contexts; cf. Griswold de Castillo 1985: 136-38.

Nevertheless, the borderlands remain a productive field for the study of history and society from an array of disciplinary perspectives (Cummins & Cummins 2000: 243). Given the demographic shifts in U.S. society, the cultural presence and significance of the Hispanic minority, and the political and economic importance of cross-border interdependencies, borderlands scholarship that “transcend[s] the boundaries between historical fields, national perspectives, and academic disciplines” not only provides avenues toward a better understanding of the American Southwest and the Mexican frontier proper (Griswold de Castillo 1984: 208), but puts the past, present, and future of the United States, Mexico, and the Americas as a whole in perspective (Wood 2000: 65). Taking its cues from the evidence rather than the postulate of ambiguity, fragmentation, and synthesis in border residents’ experience of multiculturalism, such scholarship envisions a transnational culture that would ideally support a politics promoting equality, respect for human rights, and intercultural understanding. It highlights the problems entailed in trends to liberate markets while closing political borders, such as the exploitation of the illegal workforce and challenges of insufficient education and high unemployment, and it promotes “transnational advocacy that is responsive to human needs” in order to “combat poverty, inequality, racism, and environmental despoliation” (Wood 2000: 265; cf. also Griswold de Castillo 1985: 139).

In the monuments dedicated to the memory of Oñate, in the controversy about his legacy and also in the reenactments of Oñate’s arrival, Hispanic New Mexicans maneuver between the regional designations and their respective socio-cultural implications. When they emplace contestations that revolve around the past as a succession of events or a collection of historical facts, they aim to (re)construct a homeland for New Mexican Hispanics yet at the same time they represent a fight about actual as well as intellectual ownership of the spaces of modern New Mexico. They negotiate images and inventions of ‘the Southwest’ as a space of belonging, manifest in the images of the ‘Land of Enchantment,’ the *Hispano* homeland or Aztlán. However, it rather seems that it is the ‘border-lands’ which will accommodate both difference and belonging.

V LANDSCAPES OF AMERICAN MEMORIES: FROM THE SOUTHWEST TO THE BORDERLANDS

The landscapes of the American Southwest reference both time and space in the intricate connection between the land and the people whose experiences it has registered physically and symbolically (cf. Francaviglia 1994: 10). Throughout the history of its settlement, people have turned the inherently inhospitable environment of the high deserts of the arid Southwest

into a habitat. They transformed the apparently ‘un-limited,’ undefined space into a cultural landscape, a ‘home-land,’ through technological, social and symbolic acts. Over the course of several centuries of encounter, conflict, and exchange between resident and incoming populations, the culturally specific interpretations and imaginations that informed the geographic entity commonly referred to as the American Southwest accumulated in numerous discursive layers that transformed the Southwestern topography into a cultural document – a spatial record of symbolizations and a paradigmatic landscape of overlapping memories. The spatio-temporal intersections that inform perceptions of the region are also reflected in the principal paradigms that have determined historical and, to an extent, geographical approaches to the Southwest: the frontier and the border, the homeland and the borderlands.

Considering the history of the region, Oñate’s colonizing expedition through the Rio Grande area of 1598 exemplifies the large-scale processes of actual and symbolic subjugation of colonialism. When the Spanish conquerors assumed control over ‘Indian country,’ they wrenched the land from the indigenous population and systematically subjected the Pueblos’ actual and symbolic spaces to Spanish colonial administration. Claims in the debate over Oñate commemoration to Hispanic precedence in the region as well as claims to a *Hispano* homeland are founded upon the facts and consequences of Spanish conquest. In a further wave of colonization, the Anglo American annexation of 1848 redefined the formerly Spanish conquerors into conquered Mexicans. Throughout the territorial period (1848-1912), Anglo power brokers dispossessed the Hispanic population of their landholdings and concomitantly of social standing, economic subsistence as well as political power. During the same period, the remains of Indian country were administered into a reservation system as ethnic exclaves. Concomitant with these processes of social and spatial segregation, the Southwest was turned into a specific cultural region of the United States that both affirmed political ideas and aspirations of an American nation and inspired reconceptualizations of the cultural project of ‘America.’ The Southwest emerges from the historical struggles and encounters as “many different spaces – real and imagined – plural in every sense” (Campbell 2000: 2).

Considering the symbolic dimension, the topography of the Southwest provided landmarks of cosmological significance for the indigenous populations which turned the region into a cultural landscape, even sacred space, that firmly anchored people’s cultural identity to the environment. This applies both to Pueblo groups and to long-term Hispanic inhabitants of rural New Mexico, commonly referred to as *Hispanos*.³⁴ Group-specific forms

³⁴ Attachment to the land as “the source of physical and spiritual life” (Simon Ortiz) is a central motif in traditional and contemporary forms of Native American cultural production and has informed the political struggle for minority rights. Examples for the successful defense of ethnic homelands in New Mexico are the negotiation over Taos’s Blue Lake (Rodriguez 1991: 253n8) and the protests around Tierra Amarilla (Swadesh 1968).

of attachment to place have sustained New Mexican cultures and ensured their survival despite displacement and marginalization. Exceptionalist perspectives on the region that aim to define it as a separate, particular, even exceptional place in the New World can be traced back to the Spanish explorations of *El Norte* and to the colonization of *Nuevo México*. From the early nineteenth century on, for Anglo American migrants the regional label ‘Southwest’ suggested both destination and destiny (cf. Francaviglia 1994: 9). Re-inventing the region as the ‘Land of Enchantment,’ a redemptive space of tri-cultural harmony, legitimized westward expansion and inspired Anglo American self-perceptions as a beneficial civilizing force.³⁵

Considering regional geography, ‘the Southwest’ comprises lands that are politically associated with and defined by the international boundary between two North American nation states: the United States of America and *Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. Throughout the twentieth century the view from the (north)east focused on two federal states – New Mexico and Arizona – as constituting the core of the region. Yet archaeological, historical, and anthropological scholarship suggests the more extensive transnational concept of a ‘Greater Southwest,’ a perspective that potentially even transcends the archaeological rule of thumb “from Las Vegas (NV) to Las Vegas (NM), from Durango (Mexico) to Durango (CO).”³⁶ This Greater Southwest is best delineated by a perceptible social and cultural impact of the former colonial powers on indigenous societies and their spaces. Spanish and Mexican transformations (and adaptations) of native lands and cultures are evident in settlement patterns, architecture, social systems and cultural traditions. After 1848 and especially in the northern parts of the Southwest, incipient Anglo American imperialism initiated/resulted in further socio-cultural and spatial transformation. With regard to social composition, cultural diversity, and political affiliations the Southwest thus constitutes an extensive border zone where Latin American and Anglo American societies and polities meet. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the region along the international boundary that stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Coast is immediately affected by international trade agreements like NAFTA which facilitate “accelerated transnational ‘flows’ of capital and information,” yet have also aggravated the humanitarian crisis of ‘illegal immigration’ along a severely

³⁵ Cf. Meinig 1971: 3; Francaviglia 1994: 13. The ‘invention of the Southwest’ was in the focus of regionalist studies during the 1990s, presenting a rich field of investigation in the special issue “Inventing the Southwest”; *Journal of the Southwest* 32.4 (1990). Wilson (1997) investigates the process of invention for Santa Fe. Howard & Pardue (1996) illustrate the impact of the Harvey Company. Cf. also the work of Marta Weigle and Barbara Babcock.

³⁶ In my perception of the Southwest as a transnational entity, prehistorically and presently, I am indebted to University of Arizona archaeologist Prof. Jefferson Reid who strongly advocated a comprehensive perspective that also encompasses the northern Mexican states of (at least) Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Durango. The foundations of the borderlands in archaeology and colonial history contribute to the (varying) perspectives on the region’s north-south extent.

guarded political boundary line (cf. Wood 2000: 252). This political boundary that divides and establishes the Southwest as a transnational borderland has for the longest time been perceived as separating an “advanced industrial country from an underdeveloped one” (Fernandez Kelly 1981: 250), thus perpetuating the frontier imaginary of the confrontation of civilization and savagery under late-capitalist terms and conditions (cf. Weber 1986: 71). Yet the borderlands is foremost an “area of considerable cultural diversity, where problems of international dependency, domination, and development may be appreciated with piercing clarity” (Fernandez Kelly 1981: 250) and where resident and immigrant societies interact and mutually transform each other and “combine with the physical environment to produce a dynamic that is unique to time and place” (Weber 1986: 81; cf. also 72), resulting in a truly transnational landscape rich with memory.

Consequently, the region can be characterized as a complex multicultural space that transcends its geographic location, a setting constituted through “overlapping, interconnected systems of meaning” (Campbell 2000: 2), abstracted to oftentimes contradictory theoretical paradigms owing to its flexibly used symbolic significance. For the sake of convention and simplicity, I refer to the area along the Rio Grande that I investigate in this study as a ‘Southwestern’ space; yet the ambiguities, omissions and paradoxes inherent in the designation will at times complicate my approach to the contested terrain of Oñate commemoration in New Mexico and far western Texas. The ‘Southwest’ thus represents a cultural space that can be read like a palimpsest of historical narratives of difference and belonging, each linked to cultural discourses of the American nation and instrumental to the articulation of different ethnic identities.

Spatiality has assumed a special significance for a territory that changed hands between different empires and nation-states – Spain, Mexico, the U.S.A. – which makes the Southwest a paradigmatic example for the cultural implications of territorial politics. As earlier monograph titles that deal with Hispanic history in the Southwest suggest, a major force in pressing for recognition of the so-called Hispanic contributions to American history originated in the perception that they were ‘foreigners in their native land’ (Weber 1973) for whom the Southwest had become ‘the lost land’ (Chávez 1984). Faced with a history of displacement from originally Native American lands as well as from Spanish and Mexican land grants, New Mexicans developed a heightened awareness for the symbolic role that space and place assumed for cultural identity. Therefore, when Hispanic groups advocated the establishment of cultural symbols in (contemporary) public space they aimed for compensating actual and symbolic losses in order to restore their agency and control over the

Southwestern past and to recreate the Southwestern landscape as a foundation for identity from which actual social and political equity could be claimed. The conflict over Oñate's memory is the struggle of Hispanics for a remembered and living presence within the multiply colonized spaces of New Mexico. The concomitant claim to a recognition of historical realities in commemorative forms represent, as Edward Said so aptly noted, the battle "fought by all colonized peoples whose past and present were dominated by outside powers who had first conquered the land and then rewrote history so as to appear in that history as the true owners of that land" (2000: 184). In glorifying Oñate's role, Hispanic New Mexicans reclaimed both times and spaces of the past and affirmed the "possession of a homeland with a history that is their own" through which to empower themselves and "demand political and social justice and self-determination" (Weber 1992: 358). The concept of homeland allowed to anchor Hispanic identity in a discernible geographical region of America, giving identity both an actual and a symbolic location within a pluralistic society and thus distinguishing its bearers as part of the nation state (Nostrand & Estaville 2001: xv).

Nevertheless, with regard to the constant redefinition of the meaning of 'America' as a nation of nations, Bolton's Spanish Borderlands rather than Turner's Frontier accommodates the processes of cultural negotiation and the transnational dimension characteristic for Southwestern history. In addressing the spatial concerns of the present conflicts over symbolic acts and sites of memory, my study transcends the tradition of "land-based explanations" of regional development that have been characteristic for Western American history in the Turnerian mold. Witnessing to how the struggle for symbolic space in New Mexico continues, how memories of the New Mexican past continue to be re-shaped, I take Oñate commemoration as an attempt to solidify and stabilize the fluid, deterritorialized identities in the Southwest through various strategies of emplacement and emplotment: Interpretation of the monuments is not decided, names and figures are added and re-considered, websites are overhauled to catch up with further project development, the debate continues. Thus reclaiming lost lands and forgotten pasts in order to build a reliable sense of self, Hispanic Southwesterners advocate Oñate monuments not just as markers of minority presence within national spaces, they also aspire to account for their own experience in a disambiguation of a paradoxical, real-and-imagined borderlands that is, as Gloria Anzaldúa famously proclaimed, "in a constant state of transition" (1987: 25).

MONOLOGUE

EL PASO AND THE TWELVE TRAVELERS

The monologic view is the Romantic individualist view in which ... a solitary voice [is] crying out into the night against an utterly undifferentiated background. ... There is no room for a reply that could qualify as a different voice. There is no room for interaction.

(Nancy Fraser qtd. in Gablik 1992: 6)

In our land we know of no memorial adequate to the epoch of New World discovery and exploration. This epoch was one of struggle, pain, and hardship for both conqueror and conquered, yet out of the conflict new nations were born. Such a history is worthy of our strongest endeavor.

(Houser 1988: 4)

I open the series of case studies with a site that allows me to demonstrate the difficulties of presenting the simultaneities entailed by an entanglement of spatial, temporal and highly personal narratives of the past in a linear narrative. Paradoxically, in a city that maybe most directly experiences the many idioms of memory the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* was designed as a monumental monologue. The story of creating the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* in El Paso, TX, revolves around the complex relationship between ‘the past’ and its re-presentation in public space in various forms of public art. As a monumental site of memory, it has haunted the collective imagination of the citizenry since 1988. As a site in the memory of the city, it has been present for almost a century. The sculpture project assembles twelve historic characters designed to personify local history in the urban space of El Paso. When *The Equestrian*, the second piece in the series, was eventually dedicated at the El Paso International Airport in April 2007, the story of its creation had gradually turned into an account of constructing the world’s largest equestrian sculpture. It commemorates Juan de Oñate, but owing to public controversy about the conquistador’s merits had to be renamed in November 2003. The artist presents the conquistador in full armor, mounted on a rearing horse, ready to cross the *Rio del Norte* (Rio Grande) and brandishing a scroll, *La Toma*, the “document issued by the viceroy of New Spain authorizing him to claim the Province of New Mexico for the throne of Spain” (Abram 2001; Fig. 1).³⁷ Alternately referred to as an engineering marvel or a monstrosity, the work collects a number of discursive strands, aesthetic and political, that contextualize it as much in the history of monumental sculpting in the 20th century – linking the project to American national and regional icons like Mt. Rushmore, SD, or Stone Mountain, GA – as in the settlement history of the Southwest in its evocation of Oñate’s arrival scene at the banks of the *Rio del Norte* in 1598. Over the years, the emphasis in planning *The XII Travelers* shifted from concern with community revitalization to a literal re-collection of the local past through selected historical figures. Together with the other two monument projects that I investigate in this thesis, the *XII Travelers* project literally sculpts Juan de Oñate from the colliding memories of heroic

³⁷ “The world’s largest bronze horseman” weighs approximately 11 tons and measures ca. 36 feet; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004; Abram 2001; McGirk 29 June 2001. Cf. also Delgado 8 July 1996; Thompson 9 Sep. 2001; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

exploration and of brutal subjugation, communicated both in the theme and in the style chosen for the respective public art projects. The discursive context of the debates about the Southwestern past in El Paso, but also in Alcalde and Albuquerque, became increasingly entangled in identity politics as Hispanic history was to be made a selling point for a project that divided both the Mexican American community and the overall urban population over matters of cultural identity, the right to memory and to the telling of history, and the commodification of the past for a tourist market. Rooting the project in the golden era of the city around the turn of the twentieth century, the concept informing *The XII Travelers* was perfectly geared to the historical sensibilities of an influential part of the El Paso population, and as perfectly disturbing to the rest of the community. Even though the epic theme of *The XII Travelers* might suggest a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual cast of characters that address the present in the specific idioms of their various pasts, the authorial voice that orchestrated the chorus throughout was the artist's. In John Houser's words, his work was to be understood as a "monument to principles" (XII Travelers Newsletter 1.2, Aug 1990). Yet in the making of his story/history for El Paso, such 'principles' remained uninvestigated assumptions instrumentalized by different interest groups to endorse oftentimes contradictory social, ethnic, and cultural agendas. Thus, emotions tied to crucial issues of national and ethnic identity are inextricably tied to a project that not only originates in the local imagination of El Paso's past, but is set on the (to some embattled) margins of the national entity called the United States of America.

In the chapter that follows, I intend to unfold in some detail the significance of El Paso as a site that has shaped and continues to influence popular imaginations of the Western and especially Southwestern past. I offer a historic contextualization that also elucidates the controversies around Oñate memory at the other sites along the Upper Rio Grande that I discuss. The contextualization of the events and processes that have shaped commemoration at the 'City at the Pass' also serves to explain how El Paso became central to the various regional manifestations of Mexican American identity despite its marginal location. In a second part of the chapter, I develop a project chronology that structures the convoluted planning process of Houser's sculpture project roughly along the Columbus and Oñate anniversaries of 1992 and 1998. A third part addresses the aesthetic that informs Houser's work of public art. I intend to unravel the entangled past of El Paso with close attention to spatial concerns, in order to account for the simultaneities that complicate the meanings implied in this borderlands space.

I COMING TO TERMS WITH EL PASO

El Paso: Do Texas Different!

(El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau)

El Paso has had a difficult time coming to terms with a multilayered past that characterizes the city as a crossroads of multiple exchange routes between south and north, east and west. I suggest to envision historic events that characterize El Paso as a site – such as Oñate’s arrival in 1598, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Mexican Independence, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, arrival of the railroads, economic boom – not as sign posts in the inevitable advance of time but rather as pivotal moments that impact on and produce space. A linear temporal trajectory that emphasizes the uninterrupted progress of time and equates it with cultural ‘development’ easily glosses over the instances when culture change takes on a different orientation. It has produced a perceptible imbalance in the writing of local history that ignores the strategies by which the dominant forces assert their power and abrogate the agency of the Other, as in barrioization or proletarianization and other forms of “institutionalized subordination” (De León & Cuéllar 1996: 366), oftentimes only communicated in the segregation of public space. Conventional El Paso historiography has affirmed De León and Cuéllar’s view that “scholarship on urban areas remains provincial in focus and faces difficulty gaining the attention of mainstream historians who consider ordinary life in the barrio as insignificant to the course of great events that make up American history” (1996: 376). Is there then no usable past for a multi-ethnic El Paso? It is by dwelling on the production of space and spatial transformations engendered by the flow of power and culture through the ‘Pass of the North’ that ethnic agency as well as institutions of discrimination in the border zone are revealed. The a-spatiality of commemorative works in El Paso may help to explain why trying to exploit the past in the service of constructing civic identity and community has been such a contentious proposition on the border and throughout the Southwest.

I.1 PLANNING 'THE CITY OF THE NEW OLD WEST'

Since the 1980s, long-range urban planning efforts for downtown El Paso have taken up ideas first formulated in the 'City Beautiful' movement of the 1920s and refocused on cultural projects in the widest sense in order to rejuvenate the "heart of a growing binational, bistate metropolis where multiculturalism isn't some academic buzzword but a way of life" (Selby, Fanselow and Berkmoes 1999: 499). The significance of commemorating the past through public art reflects a shift in planning philosophies toward qualitative approaches and was summarized in Sanchez's argument that "[I]t is vitally important to acknowledge and celebrate the past, and it is also very important to affirm contemporary cultural evolution and creation" (Sanchez 14 Jan. 1991). Structural revitalization intended to adapt successful models of urban transformation found in cities like San Antonio with its River Walk, envisioning revitalization along a historic theme: "It is fitting that the future of Downtown is being given momentum by a memorial to our city's past. The four centuries of recorded history at the Pass of the North are what gives this city its soul" (Lymbird 1996: 2). Committed to re-membering the past in public arts projects, in the 1980s planning centered on a downtown arts block that would accommodate general improvements through TIF projects as well as initiatives like the *XII Travelers Memorial*; in a second phase during the 1990s, it focused on strengthening the cultural infrastructure by bringing the Museum of Art and the Museum of History downtown and by expanding the Public Library during the 1990s. In this atmosphere of optimistic reorientation, hopes ran high that Houser's *XII Travelers* project would enhance sense of place and display the character and significance of the city: "El Paso has historically been a crossroads, and many giants have walked this desert patch of earth. We should take pride in our history and in the richness of a cultural legacy which speaks volumes about diversity and human societal development. [...] Ours is a cultural history which predates the rest of the nation, and we need not take a back seat to anyone" (Sanchez 14 Jan. 1991).

Curiously oblivious to the fact that (local) culture takes place and that planning history thus necessarily becomes affiliated with cultural history, the commemorative discourse and the planning practices in El Paso have remained surprisingly inattentive to the cultural productivity of location. Despite invocations of the "rich heritage" and "diversity" for the purposes of urban planning, in their attempts at appropriating a usable past planners failed to include the richness of other voices that expressed the unique character of the border town. Throughout the past decades, urban planning neglected extant, often trans-border cultural initiatives such as the festival *Cultura Para Todos*, the Border Folk Festival or the

commemoration of Mexican Independence at Chamizal National Memorial and its Juárez counterpart, *El Grito*.³⁸ Therefore, in their critique of the planning process both the public and the arts scene challenged the neglect of concerns originating in the urban community, deploring that the notion of addressing the “Hispanic heritage of El Paso” often assumed a merely compensatory function (cf. Romo 1 Nov. 1990, 27 Nov. 1990). Thus, decision makers as well as memory makers in El Paso are guilty of monologizing about the past and about the uses to which it should be put in the city’s present. The decision-making process apparently still follows non-participatory models of social engineering, risking a disconnect between the city administration and active community groups by failing to mediate discussion among different interest groups. The discord has resurfaced in the current controversy about the most recent comprehensive downtown redevelopment plan sponsored by the Paso del Norte Group (PDNG).³⁹

The XII Travelers Memorial in its artistic and commemorative monologizing offers a rich example for the incongruence between a commemorative form and its spatial context. Commemorative discourse is shaping landscapes of memory in the bi-national community of El Paso / Ciudad Juárez where economic barriers are beginning to dissolve while socio-political boundaries are reinforced. In the age of a globalizing economy, the borderlands lose much of their marginality, challenging and redefining the spatial foundations of legal and social systems. At the same time, economic realignment entails the potential for new divisions that render communities dysfunctional. Building El Paso as the “City of the New Old West” (“2005 Community Profile”) thus calls for participatory models of planning urban society and expressing it culturally in order to transcend assertive gestures that eventually only serve to affirm a pre-established (b)order. The novel flexibility and constraints of globalization call for site-specific development that emanates from the needs of local communities rather than submitting urban space to pre-conceived national designs. In order to enable border cities to function under the requirements of a reoriented global order it is as indispensable to revisit the

³⁸ *Cultura Para Todos* is an open forum on border culture held in Cd. Juárez that includes arts, letters, and performances. The established events in the community life of El Paso have often had to compete for visibility with sensational projects like *The XII Travelers*. The unveiling of Houser’s first sculpture, e.g., coincided with celebrations that commemorated Mexican Independence at Chamizal National Memorial through *El Grito* or “Viva Mexico!” a musical chronicle of 400 years of Mexico’s history, directed by Robbie Farley-Villalobos; cf. *El Paso Scene* Sep. 1996: 3. As the protests against the radical transformations envisioned by PDNG show, multiple shades of civic activism are alive and ready to coordinate their efforts within the urban community; cf. <http://www.pasodelsur.com/art.html>.

³⁹ In 2004, following what must have seemed a final verdict on the future of Houser’s *XII Travelers Memorial*, PDNG, an alliance of entrepreneurs modeled after the Chicago Commercial Club, successfully lobbied with the Mayor and City Council for a master plan outlining the future course of downtown El Paso; cf. <http://www.epdowntownplan.com>; <http://www.pasodelnortegroup.org/>.

historical roots of the spaces recreated in sites of memory as it is to map out the spatial ramifications of the past for the borderlands present.

I.2 FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS: OÑATE CROSSING THE RIO GRANDE

The history of the Pass of the North is a history without borders. It is this shared past of our two countries that unites us today in goals of economic cooperation and international understanding. In recognition of this cross-border truth let us participate together in celebrating our mutual past through the creation of the XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest.

(Houser 1995)

At El Paso, the process of colonial subjugation and colonization is condensed in the historical moment of Oñate's ceremonial taking of possession of the northern territories (*La Toma*) on April 30, 1598, deemed by historians "one of the truly important dates in the history of the continent" that marked an epochal shift between the eras of Spanish conquest and exploration on the one hand and of colonization on the other.⁴⁰ While El Paso was but a way-station on Oñate's colonizing expedition, the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* and especially *The Equestrian* partake in the highly affirmative memory complex constructed around Oñate's arrival and colonization. With the sculpture project, the act of founding would be presented permanently in public space. The sculptures tie the triumphant tale of planting and defending the Spanish colony to the modern city in order to create a legitimate place for El Paso in the national imagination of the Southwest and they establish El Paso as one of the oldest continuously settled cities in Texas and by implication the United States (Wintz 1991: 501). *The XII Travelers* relates the history of the modern border town as an optimistic story of beginnings, with each 'traveler' intended to reinforce the persuasive power of the arrival scene and thus bring a continuous series of later foundings to public memory. This collection of beginnings draws on local historic characters which are, in a traditional reading, used as allegories for 'fundamentally American' values, for example the religious motivation of colonization, a tradition of mobility in Oñate's expedition, or the economic aspirations and achievement of individual colonists.

My contextualization first looks at the emplotment of El Paso's past; I take local historians as the predominant narrators and investigate historiographic discourses established for the border town. In a second part, I introduce don Juan de Oñate as the protagonist of the colonial enterprise and pivotal character of John Houser's re-presentation in *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest*. I present the colonial act of taking possession of the new territory,

⁴⁰ Cf. Weber 1992: 80-81; "The First Thanksgiving?" 2001.

La Toma, in the third part of my contextualization. It is the center around which the place-specific history for El Paso revolves. Its significance is witnessed not only in the Oñate sculpture, but also in a pageant that reenacts arrival as ‘The First Thanksgiving’ which forms the fourth part of my contextualization. The contextualization thence shifts focus to address strategies of emplacement that can be deducted from the urban development of El Paso.

I.2.1 NARRATORS: MAKING EL PASO HISTORY

El Paso inspired the telling of grand, sometimes tall, narrations, and the patterns of writing local history in El Paso remained indebted to the paradigm of frontier historiography into the 1980s. In his 1968 account of the “City at the Pass,” C. L. Sonnichsen, nestor of Southwestern history and great narrator of western lore, contended that “perhaps no town looms larger in the legendry of the West than the one which grew up at the historic crossing on the Rio Grande [...] El Paso remained a tough town for three quarters of a century or longer” (qtd. in Hollon 1969: 371). Thus expressing the fundamental assumptions of a historiographical pattern that has been dubbed ‘cowboy history’ in more critical quarters (Troncoso 2005-2006: 6, Romo 2006), Sonnichsen told El Paso history as “a story of struggles, defeats, and conquests” (Lister 1970: 443) and thereby established a sequence of central moments that link local history to national events. It can be argued that Sonnichsen’s 1968 chronology not only served as a blueprint for writing El Paso history, as evident in later histories by Metz (1980) or Timmons (1990), but that it has also influenced both the self-perception expressed in official statements and the design of John Houser’s sculpture project.⁴¹ Sonnichsen gave the history of “one of the most wide-open, freewheeling communities in the history of the American frontier” (Hollon 1969: 372) a trajectory that leads from the beginnings of European exploration and colonization through the political, technological and social transformations and the progressive impulse of the latter half of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth-century and thus made it pertinent to national history. His narrative ends with the closing of El Paso’s urban frontier, in a period of reformist transformation and civic boosterism, when the record of the city’s ‘rich past’ was ready for transformation into ‘history’: In fact, already in 1915 mayor Tom Lea Sr. suggested to memorialize the past of a unique “meeting place of races and peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds” (Lister 1970: 443) in the detached language of public sculpture in order to signal the eventual domestication of four centuries of a ‘wild western’ past and to demarcate the spaces created in the process.

⁴¹ In its online community profile, the City of El Paso also adopts the narrative sequence of events established by Sonnichsen and Timmons to stress its significance as a “dynamic city” and “major crossroads for continental south-north and east west traffic”; cf. [http://www.elpasotexas.gov/omb/_documents/2005Comm Profile.pdf](http://www.elpasotexas.gov/omb/_documents/2005Comm%20Profile.pdf)

In the midst of the turmoils of the Mexican Revolution, mayor Lea aspired to creating a reliable sense of place and identity for a city suspended between two nations just emerging from the transformations of industrialization and imperialism. Honoring El Paso's pioneers in public sculpture was to serve as the stabilizer for national memory in a liminal location. As a side benefit, the historic sculptures would also attract visitors to a place that lay off the beaten path of most travelers to the Southwest.⁴² However, many material vestiges of diversity and especially of 'Other' pasts were eradicated from the built environment of El Paso through urban renewal policies attributable to the same progressive spirit of Lea Sr.

El Paso is presented as a "borderlands metropolis whose history is as closely tied to the states of northern Mexico as it is to the states of the southwestern United States" (Timmons qtd. in Wintz 1991: 501). Yet despite attempts to devise a usable past for purposes of urban planning, the forms and practices of memory in El Paso have displayed surprisingly little spatial sensibility. Rather, they reiterated temporal expressions of memory organized around the key events and legendary figures of exploration, colonization and conquest, thus apparently confirming J.B. Jackson's observation that the urban environment directs our attention and concern to time and movement rather than place and permanence (Jackson 1994). Although urban history was one of the central fields of origin for the study of Chicano history in the 1970s (De León & Cuéllar 1996: 363) and although critics agree that El Paso is paradigmatic for urban history in the borderlands because on the margins of two nation states it registers and reflects political, economic, and social interests that originate in more central locations of the respective nations, there is a remarkable dearth of published work reflecting research on El Paso's spatial development, such as a comprehensive history covering urban planning policies and philosophies.⁴³ Only since the early 2000s has the urban setup of El Paso been approached in a more comparative perspective indebted to urban anthropology,

⁴² During the 1920s, the city of El Paso pondered commissioning Gutzon Borglum, mastermind and sculptor of Mount Rushmore, for a monumental rock panel dedicated to local history. On the eve of the Texas Centennial celebrations (1936), Borglum indeed paid the city of El Paso several visits. Because he was seeking a new commission after the Stone Mountain project in Georgia failed, Borglum seemed inclined to consider "carving 400 years of history on the Franklin Mountains or at Hueco Tanks"; cf. Piña 1990; Davis 13 Jan. 1991; Leibson 18 Dec. 1988.

⁴³ In his study of the revolutionary era in El Paso, David Romo uncovers moments of interethnic tension pertinent to planning issues, such as the demolition of ethnic neighborhoods; cf. Romo 2005; Romo 2006. Huff (2-8 July 2006) presents a brief retrospective on urban planning in El Paso, occasioned by current plans for downtown redevelopment, that traces measures indebted to the 'City Beautiful' movement (1925) and to the ideas of urban renewal up to the "Plan for El Paso: Guide to the Year 2010" (1988). Considering the centrality attributed this very concrete place on the border and in the borderlands, the neglect of the spatial experience of the city's past and its social consequences in the *XII Travelers* project seems all the more striking. A pre-nineteenth century bias of mainstream commemoration appears also to have enabled the Paso del Norte Group (PDNG) to promote a highly controversial plan for downtown involving the disruption or even destruction of urban contexts significant for the city's twentieth-century history; cf. Romo 2006.

cultural studies and economic histories.⁴⁴ At the same time, the public debate about appropriate forms of commemorating the local past resulted in the reappraisal and institutionalization of local and immigration history, to be realized in two museum projects: the El Paso Museum of History, reopened downtown in 2007, and the Paso al Norte Migration Museum project at UTEP.⁴⁵

I.2.2 PROTAGONIST: DON JUAN DE OÑATE

Juan de Oñate, explorer and colonizer of New Mexico, was eclipsed in public perception by the conquistadors of Mesoamerica and had remained “unknown in Spain, uncelebrated in Mexico and only a murky shadow in the land he claimed for the crown” (Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998). In El Paso, his late twentieth-century renaissance and the insistence on memorializing him in celebratory fashion rests on Oñate’s rise as an explorer and colonizer:

By birth as well as by marital association Juan de Oñate y Salazar was a son of the New World and represented a new generation in Spain’s colonial system. Born around 1550 to Cristóbal de Oñate, an influential silver mine owner and *encomendero*⁴⁶ in Zacatecas who had himself participated in the conquest of the northern *frontera*, Oñate enters the stage as

⁴⁴ Sociologist Pablo Vila traces the multiplicity of individual and collective experiences of identity and ethnicity in the borderlands based on extensive interviewing between 1991 and 1997. His innovative research on processes of social identification in El Paso challenges the terms “hybridity” and “border crossing” from a somewhat cultural materialist perspective. His findings suggest that as central concepts for much postcolonial and border theory as well as for a newly emerging paradigm of a unified culture of the borderlands the terms tend toward idealization and reduction and only partially account for the complexity of identity formation along the international border; cf. Vila 2000; Vila 2005; also Ortíz-González 2004. Oscar Martínez pioneered the form of interview-based study of cultural identity in the borderlands of El Paso/Ciudad Juárez; cf. Martínez 1983; Martínez 1994; Martínez 2006 (1988). García (1981) offered a pathbreaking analysis of identity in the immigrant culture of El Paso that delineates the patterns working against integration of the Hispanic population into American society; cf. also Cardoso 1982: 197. Romo’s (2005) reinvestigation of diplomatic history takes up work done in the late 1970s (cf. Raat 1976; Raat 1981) and offers an intriguing counter-narrative to histories in the old paradigm.

⁴⁵ Cf. <http://www.elpasotexas.gov/history/>. Since 1999, the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), has planned to represent the experience of migration across the southern border of the United States in both traveling and permanent exhibits. The Paso al Norte Museum could be based on the collections of the Institute of Oral History within the Department of History at UTEP, providing archival and genealogical research facilities and a strong oral history component. The project web site describes it as geared to a growing bi-national audience, and as backed by national as well as local support. The mission statement dedicates the emerging museum to “presenting the story of migration along the borderlands of the United States and Mexico to promote an understanding of the shared history of two nations, to recognize a unique place in the world where distinct cultures enrich and revitalize each other, and to demonstrate the active role of immigrants in the formation of the U.S. society.” The academic scope also extends to Americas history and the study of borders worldwide. Cf. <http://www.pasoalnorte.utep.edu/overview.html>; <http://dmc.utep.edu/test/norte>.

⁴⁶ Under the *encomienda* (lit. trust) system, an estate of land and its native inhabitants were granted to colonists in return for their service to the crown for purposes of tribute. Although the feudal privilege stipulated that *encomenderos* pay, protect and convert their tributaries, Indian labor was often exploited and the system relapsed into the system of forced labor of the *repartimiento*.

heir to his father's wealth and repute, and as keeper of the family tradition of conquest through his participation in campaigns against the *Chichimeca*. Oñate married Isabel de Tolosa Cortés Moctezuma, descendant of Hernán Cortés and the Aztec emperor Moctezuma. Owing to family background and in terms of financial means, military experience and personal relations, Oñate seems exceptionally suited for the colonizing act.⁴⁷ Motivated by the titles and privileges that the royal decree granted – foremost among them the title of *adelantado*⁴⁸ – the colonial enterprise was an investment into Oñate's personal future as it promised both military and civilian authority. His aspirations to independence from the Crown tie Oñate back to an earlier, feudal phase of Spanish conquest, as Gutierrez (1991) observed, and justify labeling him the 'last conquistador.' Yet Oñate also stands as a prime example for the oppositional forces that transformed Spanish imperial policies during the sixteenth century when the central authority had to confront individual explorers' ambitions towards more autonomy (Jimenez 1998: 116). In a time when the Crown carefully guarded and centralized its power and minutely regulated colonization in the *Orders for New Discoveries* of 1573,⁴⁹ the pomp and circumstance that accompanied colonization rather represented a carefully orchestrated reenactment of the original invasion of Mexico and Peru, a "theater of the conquest" intended to affirm Spain's central authority (Gutierrez 1991: 46-51). The intricate choreography of colonial legislation served to remind the conquerors of their role as agents of empire rather than of their own designs.

I.2.3 KEY EVENT: LA TOMA DE POSESION

This is how the moment has gone down in memory: Oñate's trek reached the banks of the Rio del Norte on April 30, 1598, after an arduous, waterless stretch of their journey. Near the present site of San Elizario, not far from the site of modern-day El Paso, Oñate ordered ten days of rest that concluded with the first performance of the official, anticipatory act of *La Toma de Posesion*, the ceremonial taking possession of the new territory for the King of

⁴⁷ Cf. Kozlowski n.d.; Simmons 1991; McGeagh 1990; Nesbitt 1931.

⁴⁸ *Adelantado*, literally "he who goes before," denotes a representative of the King of Castile and is the title earned by the colonizer of a specific region. *Adelantados menores* or *fronterizos* were often assigned to remote provinces and played a significant role in the military conquest of the Americas. The title implied that its bearer had conquered new territories in the name of the King yet at his own expense, and bestowed on military leaders additional administrative and judicial powers in their provinces. An *adelantado* was only accountable to the Court and the Council of the Indies in Spain, thus invested with almost viceregal authority. In addition to the title of *adelantado*, Oñate received the civil title of Governor and the military rank of Captain General and enjoyed the privilege of granting *encomienda* to his colonists; cf. Sanchez 1998: 89; McGeagh 1990: 28.

⁴⁹ The full title of the royal regulations was *Ordenanzas de su Magestad hechas para los nuevos descubrimientos, conquistas y pacificaciones*; cf. Weber 1992: 389n75.

Spain.⁵⁰ The reading of legal documents detailed the rights and privileges, benefits and responsibilities implied in the settlement of the new province. It was framed by a mass and sermon as well as a military parade and a drama that reenacted the difficult journey and anticipated the successful conversion of the natives of the new province. Although the text of Captain Marcos Farfán de los Godos' 'comedia' is lost, the performance is regarded the first instance of public theater in North America.⁵¹ Villagra's epic gives an impression of the ritualistic character of the act and of the temporal and spatial sweep implied in Oñate's words:

I say that in the voice and in the name of the most Christian King Don Felipe, our lord, only defender and protector of the Holy Mother Church and its true son, and for the crown of Castile and of the kings who of his glorious stock may reign in it, and for the aforesaid my government I take and seize one, two, and three times, one, two, and three times, one, two, and three times, and all those which I can and ought, the Royal tenancy and possession, actual, civil, and criminal, at this aforesaid River of the North, without excepting anything and without any limitation, with the meadows, glens, and their pastures and watering places. And I take this aforesaid possession, and I seize upon it, in the voice and name of the other lands, towns, cities, villas, castles, and strong houses and dwellings, which are now founded in the said kingdoms and provinces of New Mexico, and those neighboring to them, and shall in future time be founded in them, with their mountains, glens, watering places, and all its Indian natives, who in it may be included and comprehended, and with the civil and criminal jurisdiction, high and low, gallows and knife, mere mixed power, from the leaf on the mountain⁵² to the rock in the river and sands of it, and from the rock and sands of the river to the leaf on the mountain. (qtd. in Chavez 1998)

The performance of *La Toma* matches the strategies of persuasion that Mackenthun identified in her pointed essay on the practical and rhetorical framing of colonial appropriation by Cortés and Hariot (1996). Reports on conquest addressed a European audience and were emplotted so as to affirm "the 'legality' and the feasibility of the colonial projects [the

⁵⁰ Most newspaper reports cite the desert stretch of the expedition and the act of taking possession, thus contextualizing the Oñate project in a standardized version of the colonists' arrival in their *Nuevo México*. When the *XII Travelers* project became focused on Oñate, especially when relocation and renaming were discussed, comments recited the arrival scene for a local as well as national audience; cf. Duin 26 Nov. 1997; McGirk 29 June 2001; Abram 2001; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002; Metz 4 Aug. 2003; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004.

⁵¹ "The First Community Theater and Playwright in the United States." *El Palacio* c. 1924: 85-87. See also Weber 1992: 77n68; Simmons 1991: 100; McGeagh 1990: 30. Villagr  relates arrival in Canto XIV as follows: "They sang a very solemn Mass, / And the learned Commissary, with wisdom, / Did speak a famous sermon, [...] / They did present a great drama / The noble Captain Farf n had composed, / Whose argument was but to show to us / The great reception of the Church / That all New Mexico did give, / Congratulating it upon its arrival, / Begging, with thorough reverence, / And kneeling on the ground, it would wash out / Its faults with that holy water / Of precious baptism which they brought, [...] There were solemn and pleasing festivals / Of splendid men on horseback, / And in honor of that illustrious day / A gallant squadron was released / From that illustrious Captain C rdenas, / [...] his standard then was given to Diego N nez. And with that we then / Did take possession of that land / In your famous, heroic, lofty name"; Villagr  313-344.

⁵² According to Weber who refers to Hammond and Rey (1953) the passage should read "from the leaves of the trees in the forests to the stones and sands of the river"; Weber 1992: 77.

conquerors] envisioned [...] fashioning themselves as sovereign masters of action” (85) in “texts which permanently seek to position them in such a way as to legitimate European ownership of [Indian] land” (81). Similar legitimizing functions can be attributed to Villagr ’s *Historia* with regard to the conquest of Pueblo country. Furthermore, the performance affirmed changes of the land premeditated by the designers of colonial expansion comprising the Viceroy, the Council of the Indies and the King. Spatial reorganization was to happen first in the imagination of the colonists. It encompassed the natural as well as the man-made landscape, man and nature, past, present and future.

The period of rest together with the ceremonies and entertainment that accompanied *La Toma* deepened the sense of arrival and of having physically and mentally gained the new land. O ate’s expedition had not only brought tools, provisions and all the other material equipment necessary to establish colonial settlement, the colonists also carried the full ideological baggage of conquest, including royal instructions and legislation, previous experience and training of the individual expedition members, and collective belief systems and attitudes toward the unknown. Colonial appropriation ideologically culminated in the moment of arrival, to be realized literally ‘according to the books’ as the expedition headed further into the new province. The ceremonial framework of a veritable ‘rite of passage’ allowed expedition members to gather their strength physically and spiritually. The symbolic acts of appropriation anticipated further conquest of Native American territory and conjured the success of the venture in the dramatic rendition of voluntary submission under Spanish rule. The immediate representation of the historical moment in O ate’s reading of *La Toma* and in the performance of Marcos Farfan de los Godos’s play affirmed the Spanish determination to cross the river, natural as well as symbolic demarcation line between relatively familiar and quite unknown terrain, and thus to transcend the limits of territorial experience and knowledge. Considering the presence of a Native American audience, publicly dramatizing a story of unchallenged success that paralleled New World conquest with the Iberian *reconquista* affirmed Spanish power: Rumors might have reached the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande through the channels of oral tradition. Thus renewed on the stage of *Nuevo M xico*, the performance of victory over the ‘infidels’ taught the futility of resistance and advised cooperation with an overlord of tremendous prestige and might.

I.2.4 REENACTMENT: MIXING MEMORIES IN 'THE FIRST THANKSGIVING'

The historic border crossing experience and its actors had all but faded into obscurity when local historian Sheldon Hall resurrected the event as The First Thanksgiving in 1989, aspiring to a visibility and iconicity of site and event comparable to that of Plymouth Rock.⁵³ Conflating the feast of Thanksgiving and the highly choreographed *La Toma*, Hall produced an imaginative rendition based on the account of Oñate's chronicler, Gaspar Perez de Villagr  s's *Historia*, that has been performed on the last Sunday in April since 1989. With every year of its reenactment, the pageant grew in cast, accessories and storyline, embellished with scenes of encounter between "amicable local Native Americans" and colonists as well as with images of bounty and feasting on fish, fowl and corn.⁵⁴ Staged at San Elizario, its reputation spread across the border so that in 1999, the City of Chihuahua asked to borrow the historic costumes for its own reenactment of the founding of the city (Vasquez 2001). Exporting the performance to Mexico expands the landscape of memory created by the O  ate pageant and adds a portentous transnational aspect to the reenactment at El Paso.

Hall's First Thanksgiving pageant established vital elements of Spanish colonialism in collective memory, presumably reconciling a distinct Hispanic identity with the national concept of American-ness through an arrival scene that antedates the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers.⁵⁵ Although historically clearly distinct in their motivations, the two historic events are retrospectively fused through the patterning of the commemorative acts of celebrating

⁵³ Hall, himself "a Mayflower descendant and New England immigrant" to El Paso ("The First Thanksgiving?" 2001), has energetically acted as a civic booster for late twentieth-century El Paso: as founder and president of the El Paso Mission Trail Association (1986) he organized the first reenactment of O  ate's arrival with the support of the Junior League of El Paso at Chamizal National Memorial in 1989. He intended the public event to raise public awareness for the preservation of the historic missions south of El Paso; cf. Simpson 1991; McKinnon 6 Dec. 1996; Duin 26 Nov. 1997; Figueroa c. 1998; Fumagalli & Clark 1998/1999; "The First Thanksgiving?" 2001; "Our 2005 Adelantado." In a nationwide publicity campaign for the First Thanksgiving aimed at both tourists and El Paso residents, he sent conquistador reenactors to Plimoth Plantation. Additionally, he successfully lobbied to include Spanish arrival on the Rio Grande in the history textbooks of major publishing houses, and helped produce ample educational material about the "lost history of this area" locally (Figueroa c. 1998) such as Bragg 1989; Flynn 1997.

⁵⁴ According to Kingston, "More than 100 costumed participants re-enacted the celebration in the 1989 re-creation performed at the Chamizal National Memorial, a few miles from where the original observance took place. Tigua Indians of El Paso played the parts of the natives of the region who met O  ate at the Rio Grande"; cf. "The First Thanksgiving?" 2001. Simpson (1991) reports on elements that were added during the first three years beginning with additional cast and also including props such as a banquet table or additional costumery such as boots and spurs, down to the elaboration of details: "'This year Spanish beards were added,' says Hall. 'We did not have them the previous years.'"

⁵⁵ Self-confidently, the El Paso Mission Trail Association advertised its pageant thus: "This 'La Toma' is one of the great historic events of North American history, comparable to the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. A play, the first in America, was created and presented, and everyone ate and drank and gave thanks for the welcome bounty"; cf. "A Reenactment," c. 1998.

'Thanksgivings' molded on an Anglo American tradition. The El Paso reenactment was officially recognized when the Texas House of Representatives declared the First Thanksgiving a holiday on April 23, 1990 (Simpson 1991). After the *Cuartocentenario*, the New Mexico State legislation also politically sanctioned April 30, 1598, as the official date of the First Thanksgiving ever held between Native Americans and Europeans in what is today the United States of America.⁵⁶ Identifying it as a central element in the Oñate memory complex, the First Thanksgiving in 1998 was celebrated at San Elizario as a splendid anniversary event including "a gala dinner-dance and a joint concert by the El Paso and Chihuahua, Mexico, symphonies" framed by a three-day Renaissance Fair (Duin 26 Nov. 1997), comparable to the celebrations at the living history museum *El Rancho de las Golondrinas* south of Santa Fe (Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998).

When Hall co-opted Oñate crossing the Rio Grande for the purposes of his First Thanksgiving pageant, he reiterated the colonial strategies of persuasion, this time legitimizing and consolidating the liminal situation of a border city with a U.S. American audience in mind and framing local history in terms of a national foundation myth. He engaged in a mixing of memories that enabled El Paso's self-promotion as a "warm and friendly mosaic of cultures, traditions and ethnic groups" ("2005 Community Profile") collecting Spanish, *mestizo* and Native American memories that originate in a long tradition of coexistence and ethnic pluralism (Timmons 2001, Wintz 1991: 501). The First Thanksgiving combined arrival scenes and pioneer myth in a reenactment designed to unite the many beginnings of El Paso under a common theme and performed in public space. In the same spirit, the *XII Travelers* project was contributing, literally, to El Paso's difficult process of "trying to figure itself out" (Selby, Fanselow and Berkmoes 1999: 501), tangibly materializing the past in public space in order to inspire civic pride and communicate a sense of place.⁵⁷

Sheldon Hall's reinterpretation of the act of colonial appropriation on the Rio Grande not only turned the conquistador into a latter-day pilgrim, but it also reintroduced notions of mono-ethnic heritage and regional exceptionalism to the discourse on ethnic diversity on the border. Casting Hispanic minority history in an Anglo national mold in its evocation of

⁵⁶ The New Mexico Hispanic Culture Preservation League (NM HCPL) had lobbied Sen. Richard M. Romero in 1999 to introduce Memorials concerning 'The First Thanksgiving' and Hispanic History month to the legislature. Cf. <http://www.nmhcp.com/senatememorials.html> "A Joint Memorial Proclaiming" and "A Joint Memorial Requesting." In 2000, April was made Hispanic New Mexico History Month. The example is indicative of the close links established between El Paso and the more northerly areas of New Mexico through Oñate commemoration, as well as of the political strategies by which group interest was realized on the city and state levels.

⁵⁷ Apostolides was the first to point out the close interrelation between the First Thanksgiving and *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* (19 Oct. 1989); he also commented on the potential of commemorative events for building a distinctive sense of place and inspiring civic pride in a particular heritage (Oct. 1990).

foundational acts, commemoration on the border casually ignored some 250 years of Spanish and Mexican history of the area, not to mention Native American history. Instead, it conjured up national consensus and was geared to gathering the city in the fold of national interests. In trying to include the many parts of local history in a coherent narrative that indicated the connection of the border city to the national core, commemorative forms in El Paso became exclusive of a large number of community members. Despite invocations of the “rich heritage” and “diversity,” in its monologizing about its own historical vision *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* remained factually deaf to the richness of other voices, past and present, that expressed the unique character of the border location. Reenacting arrival instrumentalized colonial beginnings to overwrite a history of minority agency, revolution, and resistance to political, economic and cultural disfranchisement marked by the Pueblo Revolt, the Mexican Revolution or most recently the Chicano Movement. Eventually, ‘The First Thanksgiving’ as much as John Houser’s Oñate and *XII Travelers* in El Paso emerge as profoundly Anglo American sites of memory incongruent with Hispanic memories at the Pass. Judging from the controversy about the *XII Travelers Memorial*, El Paso at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains suspended between exclusive and inclusive concepts of urban community and national space, while on a symbolic level it is lost in a mix of memories, “between Dixie and Aztlán” (Chacon 2001).

I.3.1 SURVIVING ON THE RIO GRANDE: COLONIAL SETBACKS

Emphasizing beginnings and civilizational achievements seriously downplayed the breaks and setbacks in the story of colonial expansion. Oñate’s fording the Rio del Norte had remained practically without consequences for the history of settlement in the El Paso area until Garcia established a mission in 1659. Seventeenth-century settlement nucleated around the Tigua and Piro missions of Ysleta and Socorro (1682), later foundings centered on the presidio at San Elizario (1789). Over the course of the nineteenth century, the area of present-day downtown El Paso amalgamated from various smaller settlement foci into the city that was incorporated as El Paso in 1873, including the grant to Ponce de Leon (1827) or the Anglo American mail and trading station of James Wiley Magoffin (1849) that grew to become the first Ft. Bliss (1854).⁵⁸ The historical perspective that informed Oñate commemoration in El Paso

⁵⁸ The renaming of several settlement cores makes for a convoluted nineteenth-century history of the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez area. Ponce de Leon acquired the first grant north of the Rio Grande from the city administration of El Paso del Norte, today Cd. Juárez, in 1827. Reflecting change of ownership, Ponce’s Rancho later became Coon’s Rancho, then Franklin and Smithsville, before surveyor Anson Mills determined the name “El Paso” in 1859; cf. Jallad 1999-2000. The Anglo American roots of El Paso go back to settlements around the trading post of James Wiley Magoffin, encompassing Hart’s mill (now La Hacienda restaurant), Stephensonville/Concordia, and Benjamin Coon’s mercantile store that tied the American settlement core to the Ponce de Leon grant; cf.

privileged triumphant arrival over Native American resistance to Spanish colonization. It thus not only glossed over two of the most dramatic incidents of early interethnic relations, the Battle of Acoma (1598) and the Pueblo Revolt (1680), but displayed a structural amnesia that amounted to a denial of Native American agency.⁵⁹ In fact, the Pueblo Revolt is highly significant for the history of settlement in the border area because El Paso served as a refuge for survivors of the Pueblo Revolt who were forced to withdraw south. In 1680, the resistance to the factual occupation of Native villages by Spanish colonials and the exploitation of their supplies and labor force organized into a powerful coalition and erupted in open hostilities that temporarily annihilated the northernmost colony of New Spain. In a reversal of the earlier movement north from New Spain, the transformation of the landscape now originated in the colonial culture that had evolved over seven decades under the cultural and environmental conditions of the Upper Rio Grande Valley and brought south a new population of Spanish colonists and their Pueblo allies together with topographic names and agricultural techniques. The space of El Paso was inscribed with the memories of Spanish defeat and humiliation on the northern frontier, but the narrative related by the Oñate monument project and local history in general downplays the colonial crisis, choosing instead to remember the impact of Spanish victory at Acoma.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Spanish presence in the borderlands remained fragile, considering that the Spanish colonial landscape with its classic pattern of nucleated settlement around missions and presidios was a fundamentally defensive setup. The first three centuries of Spanish colonial presence in the American Southwest were characterized by territorial expansion and consolidation in an already dynamic landscape that had been further destabilized and profoundly transformed by the superimposition of Spanish colonial order. Yet what is commemorated of this precarious period in the *XII Travelers Memorial* is an unbroken progression from glorious beginnings to a prosperous future. Even the fundamental political changes of the early and mid-nineteenth century, Mexican Independence and the Mexican American War, did not affect the emplotment of the past at El Paso and caused only a slight re-alignment in the story of the advance of civilized order, passing the role of protagonist with regard to economic, technological and cultural progress from Spain and Mexico to the United States. Nevertheless, the ‘Other’ story is written in and through the becoming of urban space.

Villegas 1999-2000. Cf. also Tellez 1994; Timmons 2001; “2005 Community Profile”; Weber 1992; and the histories by Sonnichsen, Timmons, and Metz.

⁵⁹ For a summary of the revolt and its consequences see Gutierrez 1991: 130-40. Knaut (1995) investigates the competing explanations for the pivotal event in Borderlands history: external disturbance of mutually beneficial interethnic relations by non-sedentary, raiding Native American groups vs. longstanding antagonism between Pueblo and Spanish colonial society as two monolithic sociocultural entities; cf. Snow 1997.

I.3.2 REDEFINING THE RIO GRANDE: NINETEENTH-CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONS

In the nineteenth century, El Paso registered pivotal events that redefined its spatial, political and cultural location to a degree comparable to Oñate's entering the Southwestern scene: Just as Oñate's venture had concluded the era of Spanish exploration in the Americas and opened an era of colonial settlement (cf. Weber 1992: 80-81), the Mexican American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) remade the city as a border town. The river became a demarcation line between two national territories. Shortly afterwards, the arrival of the railroad in the early 1880s heralded the industrial revolution, contributing to the technological transformation of the Southwestern landscape from an agrarian to an industrial space and inaugurating the era of boom-and-bust economy with its concomitant Western mythology rooted in mining and ranching. Goods and ideas that had previously traveled north and south along the *Camino Real* were gradually replaced by the east-west flow of capital and concepts originating in the eastern parts of the United States along stage coach lines. At the same time, industrialization initiated a steadily growing stream of migration into the El Paso area both from the east and the south, thus further justifying the popular label crossroads.⁶⁰ Historic events, demographic shifts and technological transformations became culturally productive and registered on the symbolic level but they also materialized in the built environment of the city. Despite the cross/roads dynamic, the historical narrative about El Paso favored the image of linear movement over the image of crossing and encounter: As it calls to mind the successful superimposition of U.S. American civilizational order on the growing 'wild west' town, it can afford to remain silent on the history of cultural exchange and mixing that occurred over the centuries at the intersection of cultural, political and social forces and to ignore the often oppressive confrontation of two young nation states. Even the interpretation offered by urban historian Mario Garcia views the cultural expressions of immigrants as "*superimposed* on the city's long-standing Indian-Spanish-Mexican heritage" (Martinez 1982: 290, emphasis mine), diminishing the relevance of continuing processes of *mestizaje* that strictly speaking were already embodied in Juan de Oñate.⁶¹ The traces of 'progress' in the built environment were naturalized as inevitable consequences of industrialization and urbanization rather than active expressions of the underlying assumptions driving change in

⁶⁰ Cf. Timmons 2001. Apostolides enthusiastically proclaimed "We're a hub, a crossroads, a gateway to and from Mexico – and it's high time we showed it"; 15 Dec. 1988. Sanchez likewise promoted the historic significance of the city as a crossroads (14 Jan. 1991), and the image has been taken up in general discourse and promotion of the city; cf. Zanetell 18 Apr. 1991; http://www.elpasotexas.gov/omb/_documents/2005CommProfile.pdf; <http://www.epdowntownplan.com/Index.aspx?Section=About&Page=Introduction#Introduction>.

⁶¹ Don Juan de Oñate had claimed status through his affiliation with both the old world and the new world elites. Ambitious and well-endowed, he maybe best embodied the new upper class of Spanish colonialism – with a *mestizo* background and having gained a reputation and riches on New Spain's northern frontier.

all fields of urban society on the actual and the symbolic levels. Taking the image of cross/roads seriously might have offered more appropriate interpretations for the predicament of multiple El Paso pasts.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the political and economic transformations as well as the social and political upheaval in Mexico engendered yet another population movement that impacted on the urban space of El Paso: intra-Mexican migration north to the border as well as emigration to the United States. In his study of Mexican migration patterns through El Paso, Mario Garcia outlined the spatial consequences of economic disparity that already at the turn of the twentieth century drove economic growth of the region in its dependence on the “availability of workers south of the border who were pushed out of Mexico by poverty and civil war” (Martinez 1982: 290). El Paso became the largest port of entry for Mexican immigrants, a status that it kept into the 1960s and that links it to other U.S. American sites of immigrants’ memory: “What Ellis Island and New York are to European immigrants, El Paso is to Mexican immigrants” (Martinez 1982: 289). Only recently have plans for an immigration museum addressed the significance of this ‘Other’ immigration history in the national and hemispheric context.⁶²

At the same time, binationality offered political refuge and the city evolved into a base for radical political activism directed against the regime of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico for which Pancho Villa served as a colorful figure head.⁶³ Immigration from Mexico provoked by the violence of the Mexican Revolution complemented the working-class immigrant population of El Paso with a considerable portion of middle- and upper class expatriates, who soon began to engage in “forging a vibrant community, in manifesting their identity, and in fighting discrimination” in an endeavor of “adjusting to a new life” when the option of return became less feasible (Martinez 1982: 290). While emphasis on the “internal dynamics of Chicano urban communities” would have argued strongly for Hispanic agency in the making of history, community and identity (De León & Cuéllar 1996: 366-68), the established discourse in El Paso about the Mexican Revolution reduced and contained its consequences for Mexican and U.S. American social and spatial organization on the border in a specific reading of *mestizaje*. Rather than creating new cultural forms, in this interpretation *mestizaje* represents just another additive assemblage of elements originating in different traditions. In the official interpretation offered by the 2005 Community Profile, *mestizaje* began with Mexican Independence in 1821 and left its imprint on El Paso in the “significant and distinctive *contributions* to our community in art, literature, music, and cuisine while continuing many

⁶² Cf. Martinez May 2002; “New Yorkers” 21 June 2002.

⁶³ Cf. Garcia 1981; Romo 2005. By implication and in passing also Raat 1976; Raat 1981.

traditions of our Spanish founders” (“2005 Community Profile,” emphasis mine). *Mestizaje* is co-opted by the logic of recognition history, as the nation-building result of nineteenth-century independence movements rather than as a process of selective adaptation throughout colonial history or a counter-model to assimilation forged during the Mexican Revolution. According to the promotional text, the independence of Texas and the subsequent influx of Anglo settlers added “frontier spirit and cowboy heritage” to nascent El Paso where a future-oriented “pioneering spirit” combined with the veneration of a “rich history” to forge “a community that is uniquely American” (“2005 Community Profile”). Official interpretation of the past and of place engaged in commodifying the complex forces entailed in the imperial superimposition of power over the land and in the processes of cultural change, turning them into marketable moments geared toward use for tourism and planning. It generates recognizable images which in turn impact on the ways in which the past is perceived and investigated: The disruptive energies of revolutionary and resistance movements were not factored into such consensus-oriented narratives. Yet the urban space is expressive of a “unique relationship existing between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez” (Timmons 2001) and by extension between the United States and Mexico not only in the history of its ethnic composition and population dynamic. On the level of international politics, El Paso formed the spatial base for United States secret service involvement in countering the anti-Porfirian revolutionary movement in Mexico, or for the anti-immigrant repatriation programs of the 1930s. With regard to economic conditions the *maquiladora* industries and NAFTA highlight not just transnational corporate cooperation, but instances of legal and economic inequity along a border where “the third world implodes into the first world” (Saldívar 1997: 8). The politically charged debate about illegal border crossers and increasing border control may serve as the most recent example. These circumstances relativize the official claims to remembering independence and a tradition of coequal interethnic and transnational exchange.

I.3.3 RE-MEMBERING EL PASO: FACING DECLINE

When in the 1960s El Paso began to decline owing to a shift of immigration to other ports of entry and the economic demise of its mining and refining industries, the liminality of its newly peripheral location increasingly affected business and image with visible poverty, the rise of drug trafficking and related crime. Following an international agreement that settled decades of boundary argument – the Chamizal Convention of 1969 – and taking up the social and cultural impulses released by the Chicano Movement, public culture in El Paso was revived and found its most famous expression in the lively mural scene beginning in the

1970s.⁶⁴ Directly addressing the issue of shared public space, the socially committed and politically engaged mural projects were to offer counter-images to the negative stereotypes that had become associated with the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez borderlands. Expressing issues of border experience alongside political concerns with a view towards cultural exchange and international cooperation with Mexico, the murals were essential to constructing a Chicano landscape of memory where the marginalized, as Banerjee pointed out so eloquently for San Francisco, “(re)claim, through visual inscription, a space they have been part of all along” (2005: 295).⁶⁵ Yet despite the increasing significance of the bi-national, tri-state situation of the city and contrary to Banerjee’s optimistic reading, in El Paso the mural tradition with its roots in the Mexican tradition of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Sisqueros, and José Clemente Orozco, could not permanently reappropriate “the space of the mainstream” (307).

Trying to turn the tide, the city of El Paso set out to formulate a distinctive sense of place responding to the diversity that according to self-promoting documents “places El Paso at the forefront of communities transcending borders - a truly global culture right in our own back yard” (“2005 Community Profile”). Yet it threatened to produce irreconcilable division within the urban community.⁶⁶ In the 1980s, El Paso murals came under assault by planning efforts that traded the reconciliatory utopia of “coexistence between the historical and the present, the political and the personal, the individual and the politically iconic” (Banerjee 2005: 309) for a more exclusive reclamation of the heroic in the interest of conservative groups. A usable past was constructed by reference to “some aspect of local history that was dramatic yet personal. It had to be positive, point to the endurance of basic American values, and express belief in a prosperous and stable future drawn from the past” (Morgan 1983: 775), thus marking a return to the historic sensibilities of Depression era muralism and of Lea’s model for Houser’s sculpture path. Ironically, the only superficially less politically charged sculptures by Houser emulated the mural genre not only thematically but also in their narrative strategy: the sculpture path converted “history into an accumulation of portraits” privileging episodes and scenes over a coherent narrative while still relying “on the authority

⁶⁴ Owing to the number and reach of its mural projects, El Paso has been dubbed “mural capital of the world” (“Debut” 30 Sep. 1996; Schwartz).

⁶⁵ Welcoming the plans for urban revitalization as a much-needed effort to (re)build a distinctive identity for El Paso, columnist Alex Apostolides invoked the enthusiasm generated for downtown in the early to mid-seventies and called for a revival of the “downtown is everybody’s neighborhood”-spirit and of “the sheer free energy that surged through El Paso’s streets long ago”; Apostolides 15 Dec. 1988.

⁶⁶ The divisive energies leading to a “carefully orchestrated cultural exclusion” of Chicanos also found their echo in editorials that challenged the fairness of local press coverage of ethnic issues. Chacon claimed that “the racist legacy of the two El Paso newspapers against Chicano politicians” was evident in reports on *The XII Travelers* or the mural competition for a new county courthouse and complained that “the arts in El Paso that are financed by public money operate to exclude the Chicano reality”; Chacon 9 Sep. 1990; cf. also King 22 Sep. 1989; Crowder 2 Sep. 1990; Romo 1 Nov. 1990; Romo 27 Nov. 1990; Baron n.d.

of texts over the power of images to knit its congested details together” (Lee 1999: 115). The close association with the political sympathies of the Chicano movement enabled the city administration to declare the murals “witnesses of a bygone era of political struggle” (Banerjee 2005: 291) and thus irrelevant to attempts at valuing urban spaces. In contrast, the sculptures could be more easily integrated into planning processes as commodified forms of public art and representations of history. Thus what at first glance appears like a competition between forms of public art or between individual projects represents competing, even oppositional views of urban space and its function for the community. Sense of place understood as distinctive ‘local color’ had become a “resource” in marketing the city as a destination for modern-day travelers: “El Paso would be enhanced simply *using* its native culture and history *as an attraction*.”⁶⁷ The immediate expressions of contested border identity and memory that the murals presented were erased – often quite literally due to lack of funds for upkeep or by neglect – in favor of a mythologizing version of the local past that leaned closer to the established tale of the nation and also focused its attention outside the community. Neglect of the murals as visible reminders of the contestation of public space (Banerjee 2005: 321) disclosed on the spatial level the often challenged neglect, even silencing of the Hispanic past: The paradoxical absence of direct references to the realities of the border, be that the disputes over determining the international boundary line, the U.S. American involvement in counter-revolutionary measures during the Mexican Revolution, or the economic disparities between and within the border cities, served to de-emphasize El Paso’s situatedness in the liminal zone between U.S. American and Mexican political interests and cultural affiliations.⁶⁸ Supporters of the *XII Travelers* project invoked an El Paso as seen through the lens of the Lea dynasty and adopted a rhetoric of historical imagination that emphasized primacy on the land, advancement of civilization, mobility and the individual achievement and hardy self-reliance of explorers and so-called pioneers. However, recurring to Tom Lea Sr.’s transformation of El Paso not only evokes ‘City Beautiful’ memories of civic improvement and ambition, but also resurrects attitudes and opinions forged in the era of the anti-socialist, anti-anarchist Red Scare (Huff 2-8 July 2006; Romo 2005, 2006). Lea’s administration was characterized by rising xenophobia and nativism that practised minority exclusion from civic services, limited access to education and denial of civil rights such as

⁶⁷ Sanchez 14 Jan. 1991, emphases mine. Cf. also the appraisal from the developers of San Antonio’s River Walk who commended the planning theme proposed by Houser for its historical bent; David J. Straus to Mayor Azar and Citizens of El Paso 21 Mar. 1990.

⁶⁸ In a critical reflection on the absence of Mexican history in the narrative promoted by the Oñate statue, Martinez had summarized the paradigm of national history and the dilemma it posed for minority history: “Now, 82 years later after [the Mexican] revolution, we look back and struggle to make sense of this history – our history. This *is* our history, if no longer our country”; Martinez 2003.

free speech and press, as Raat (1981) and Romo (2005) observed.⁶⁹ Faced with the spatial evidence of material and ideational decline, well-intentioned planning efforts throughout the past twenty-five years that aimed at uniting the patchwork of origins and create a coherent sense of place have come very close to translating the spirit of exclusion to the turn of the twenty-first century.

II THE XII TRAVELERS MEMORIAL OF THE SOUTHWEST: A DISCOURSE ON RENEWAL THROUGH PUBLIC ART

In the introduction to her study *The Colossus of Roads*, Karal Ann Marling diagnosed “an American penchant for commemorating our lost frontiers with gigantic statuary” (1984: xii). She indicates the need to understand and approach from a spatial perspective those cultural artifacts that affirm central tenets of American culture and that serve to mark the boundaries of American society. *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* both in its material form and in the controversies that accompanied its creation certainly constitutes one such gigantic cultural artifact. In the following chapter I outline Houser’s initial proposal for *The XII Travelers*, then trace the planning process from proposal to dedication in a three-part chronology organized by the anniversaries of Columbus’s and Oñate’s ‘landfalls’ (II.1: 1982-1992; II.2: 1992-1998; II.3: 1998-2007). Conceptually, *The XII Travelers* demonstrate the limits of integrating commemorative motivations into urban revitalization. Technically and administratively, *The XII Travelers* became increasingly focused on a gigantic Oñate sculpture as its pivotal piece and ran into both financial and conceptual troubles that threatened to fail the entire project at great cost to the city and the artist. Thematically, the Oñate sculpture assumed a controversial momentum of its own: After almost two decades, the idea of honoring individual regional pioneers in public art seemed overwhelmed by issues of marketing the city as a (tourist) destination. Nevertheless, the project turned El Paso into a stage for the ongoing controversy about conquistador commemoration in New Mexico in the late 1990s and made it a touchstone for the recognition of cultural diversity in public art.

⁶⁹ As Raat (1981) points out, for Mexican Americans the ‘Progressive Era’ entailed quite repressive features, especially where access to education, economic and residential segregation and political articulation in the press were concerned (Romo 2005). The diplomatic history of the Mexican Revolution in El Paso/Ciudad Juárez was a productive field of inquiry into the 1980s. Since then, studying the Revolution has undergone a reorientation and reemerged with a cultural and social history concern; cf. De León & Cuéllar 1996.

II.1.1 1982-1988: URBAN RENEWAL THROUGH PUBLIC ART?

In the early 1980s, the city of El Paso confronted downtown deterioration and the crisis within the urban community by attempting urban redevelopment through, among other measures, forms of public art. In order to stimulate social and economic development in its ailing downtown, in 1982 the city administration designated 88 blocks in the central business district for Tax Increment Financing (TIF).⁷⁰ Uncommon for TIF policies, the TIF board in El Paso also considered artistic and cultural projects as economic stimuli for the downtown area which offered both space and ambience for the arts community and thus also promised an increase in culturally minded visitors and concomitant business. Yet the inclusion of artistic projects in city policies such as TIF also represented a genuine conflict of interest as it was feared that the designation of public, tax-payer generated funds might subsidize private enterprise in projects that might only superficially merit the spending of public monies.⁷¹

Responding to the call for submission of project proposals, in early 1988 Tucson painter and sculptor John Houser envisioned a large-scale downtown revitalization project which he designed as a “walk through history” (Fig. 2). Organized around so-called key personalities from the history of the city, it would be realized in the form of a sculpture path and memorial park modeled on a collection of historic vignettes by El Paso painter and writer Tom Lea III, entitled the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest*. In addition to the sculpture path, Houser suggested to incorporate a downtown studio and on-site foundry as tax-generating infrastructural elements, attracting visitors to a work in progress, as well as to provide space for future use by the local arts scene or for institutions like a cultural center or museums (Houser 1988: 4).⁷² He envisioned redevelopment of downtown in a novel “blend of art and history” (Crowder 1 Mar. 1988), emanating/germinating from a downtown arts block

⁷⁰ Creating revenue through reinvestment of a portion of the taxes collected in a designated area, the instrument of TIF is usually applied to improve infrastructure, offer incentives to private business and thus stimulate tax return: “Under Tax Increment Financing, revenues received by taxing entities from property taxes on an 88-block area of Downtown were frozen at 1982 levels. Money collected over that because of either increased valuations or tax rates would be used to finance up to \$40 million in improvements. It was hoped property values then would increase because of the improvements and thus eventually return more money to those taxing entities”; Viescas 11 Mar. 1990, Olvera 18 Mar. 1990. Cf. also Phelps 31 Jan. 1987; Piña 1990: 2; Eroles 1 Aug. 1990; Zanetell 28 Mar. 1991.

⁷¹ Early in the development of the project, gallerist Al Harris voiced reservations about “redevelopment plans involving artistic or cultural attractions” because they allowed to circumvent the administrative proceedings common within the arts community; cf. Crowder 1 Mar. 1988.

⁷² For TIF designations as the motivation for Houser’s proposal see also Baron 2001; Merced 31 Oct. 1999. For a report on the cultural focus of redevelopment in El Paso see Farley-Villalobos 1 Oct. 1991; for the idea of a downtown arts block see Phelps 31 Jan. 1987. Zanetell outlines the administrative implications and public responses during early development of the project in a series of articles; cf. Zanetell 28 Mar. 1991; 4 Apr. 1991; 18 Apr. 1991; 16 May 1991.

that might inspire similar initiatives throughout the city or even the country (Phelps 31 Jan. 1987). Given the extant debate about the need to cater to the chronically underfunded El Paso arts community, Houser's design was on to a good start.

Houser's initial proposal was thematically and conceptually tailored to the location, yet it soon underwent revisions that indicate a gradual downsizing of the original idea and a concomitant reversal in didactic intent.⁷³ In the first draft of his proposal (1988), Houser pitted "facts" against "experience" with a historic walking tour that offered visitors an immersion experience in the regional past. His representation of the "facts of history" in monumental sculpture aimed at an emotional response from visitors who physically retraced the steps of the ancestors. They were to gain an individual understanding of the past that transcended the erudition of historical interpretation and that would enhance self-education and self-awareness through the experience of art rather than via the abstractions of scholarly discourse (1988: 2). Houser designed *The XII Travelers* so as to "dramatize" and enter into dialogue with "other historic and cultural aspects" (4) of the city and region, arranging the sculptures within a comprehensive "historic pageant" that materially anchored the imagined past to urban space (4; 2). However, the imaginative and interactive approach was traded for an authoritative presentation of the "dramatic unfolding of Southwestern history" (1989: 5) when the artist aspired to recording rather than imagining the past in his revised proposal of 1989: Ignoring the implications of artistic representation, Houser phrases the intent of the sculpture walk as "spotlighting" and "emphasizing" historic features (6) and developments, thus commemorating "El Paso's historic contribution" as givens and communicating them in an authorial manner (6; 2). Between 1988 and 1989, emphasis of the project shifted from issues of place to issues of the past, from a spatial to a decidedly temporal imagination of El Paso's history. Houser maintained his focus on monumental sculptures as "geographic symbols and landmarks" (1988: 1; 1989: 1) which "attest to the power of art in denoting a sense of place" and were to make the *XII Travelers* as emblematic for the city of El Paso as the Golden Gate Bridge for San Francisco, or the Gateway Arch for St. Louis (Houser 1988: 1; 1989: 1), yet he subtly changed the contextual imagery and the symbolism within which he framed his proposal: While in 1988 the city as a place and a process had taken first place in his introductory remarks, a year later that role was assigned to the abstraction of El Paso's "silent and largely invisible history" (1989: 2). Houser thus resorted to the discursive trope of

⁷³ My interpretation rests on two versions available at UTEP Special Collections: John Sherrill Houser, "The Twelve Travelers: A TIF Theme Proposal," 4 pp., 1988; and "The XII Travelers Sculpture Memorial of the Southwest: A TIF Urban Revitalization Proposal for the City of El Paso," 6 pp., 2 ill., 28 July 1989. In a correspondence with mayor Azar (18 Oct. 1989), Houser refers to another proposal that adds biographical information, technical details on the sculpting and casting, and contractual outlines. While unavailable to the author, the latter does not appear to contain significant conceptual differences with the available documents.

the ‘neglected Hispanic past’ at the same time that he steered his project towards a commodification of local heritage for the tourist market, revealing “profit and place” as the driving forces in the colossal enterprise (cf. Upton 1988: 703). The reorientation may be attributed to the specifications in the Call for Proposals and to planning concerns, yet the change in emphasis also eliminated a number of conciliatory gestures between ethnic groups and nations that the earlier proposal had suggested. The elisions resurfaced in the ensuing controversy over the project as critique of the exclusive character of the project.

In order to show that the alterations are not incidental but rather indicative of the scope of the ideational shift that the proposal underwent I discuss two further instances where the second proposal significantly deviates from the first: In the 1988 version, water imagery abounded and consequently the project draft began by declaring the Rio Grande the unifying theme for the Twelve Travelers, approaching the river as a “flow of water which both unites and divides.” Water became essential for the memorial park where Houser planned two colossal allegorical figures that were to represent the modern nations of Mexico and the United States. The Atlas-like sculptures were to bear between them the river source as a spring of life: water that fell from a slab on their shoulders was to be channeled into a reservoir that reflected the flow of time along its embankment in a frieze depicting the Oñate expedition. At the center of a reflecting pond, Houser planned a group of bronze sculptures depicting Oñate with his wife, his son and attendants. In a powerful statement that could have won Houser sympathies later in the controversy, the artist declared this group “the Southwest’s historic ‘first family’ in whom the new and old worlds are physically and symbolically united” (1988: 3).

In the later version of the proposal, a comparable acknowledgement of *mestizaje* as well as the allusion to transnational significance of the monument site and the importance attributed to water as a symbol and a reality in an arid environment were missing. Houser proceeded to use water as an element of his design, yet in a merely decorative manner, reflecting and highlighting the sculpted colonists and the “heroic equestrian of Don Juan de Oñate” (1989: 5). While Houser had started out with a compact two-block Twelve Travelers Sculpture Park in the earlier planning stage (cf. 1988: 3), the 1989 version gave priority to a sculpture walk leading through downtown and ending at a sculpture park near the border, thus commemorating the “epic journeys” undertaken by individual pioneers and reflecting the new emphasis on the “history of the ford or *paso* across the Rio Grande” (1989: 4; 2; see Fig. 2). The individual travelers were to lead the visitor to a sculpture grouping in the park depicting the conquistador accompanied by his young son and several Indian guides (1989: 5). Crossing rather than arriving at the river became the important activity evoked through the project, and

it seemed inevitable that in the history of the “*gateway to the Southwest*” (1989: 2, author’s emphases) culture contact was again framed in a rhetoric of discovery and colonization. The artistic choices made for the 1989 proposal profoundly alter the interpretation of the central piece in Houser’s project: References to *mestizaje* were mostly deleted by omitting the tangible presence of the gendered Other, Oñate’s wife. Also, the ethnic Other was relegated to the same childlike level as the conquistador’s son, and the conquistador given visible dominance. Thus, the design for the central sculpture grouping exalted the feats of the individual, male explorer and eliminated all potential claims to equity and collectivity that could have been inferred from the earlier proposal. Although Houser claimed a “broader historical perspective” acknowledging a shared history with Mexico and even Spain (1989: 3), in its changed form the project no longer contextualized local historic processes in an international or even global sphere. Rather, the proposal of 1989 tightened the associations between the local and the U.S. American past, affirming rather than transcending the dividing line of the international border. The transnational potential of the project was irretrievably lost. The era of “New World discovery and exploration,” in Houser’s words an “epoch [...] of struggle, pain and hardship for both conqueror and conquered,” characterized by a conflict out of which “new nations were born” (1988: 4) only returned in the innocuous language of an “overlooked and disregarded” past, as a “*common heritage* which the *Southwest* shares across race, culture and international boundary” (1989: 6, emphases mine). Issues of ethnic and national difference were contained in the notion of “shared” or “common” heritage and thus became naturalized elements of border reality, no longer fields of negotiation, let alone fields of agency. By eliminating the emancipatory potential from his large-scale monument project, John Houser who had initially set out to “water the dormant seed” that Tom Lea had planted and help the “pageant” of El Paso history materialize in durable, tangible, three-dimensional form (1988: 2) ended up reaping a storm of resistance from the part of those who felt excluded from the historical vision communicated by the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest*.

II.1.2 1988-1990: FROM ENTHUSIASM TO CONTROVERSY

Houser's ideas initially received positive responses from city council and arts committee members and the historic theme of the *XII Travelers Memorial* was sympathetically, even enthusiastically received throughout the community (cf. Crowder 1. Mar. 1988). The project was regulated in a city ordinance that designated one million dollars in TIF funds for the entire *XII Travelers* project, with 137,000 dollars set aside for the first sculpture.⁷⁴ Enthusiastic project supporters founded the *XII Travelers Volunteer Committee (XII TVC)* in 1989 as a form of "grass roots" community involvement and first reported on its activities in a newsletter dated April 1990.⁷⁵ For proponents of the *XII Travelers*, the approaching Quincentenary presented a new occasion to mark New World history in the urban space of El Paso. Consequently, in 1988 Houser applied for and received Quincentennial endorsement on the part of the Presidential Quincentenary Commission. The recognition as an "official project" of the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary entailed no financial commitment but Houser and his supporters hoped that it would appeal to potential donors and ease the fundraising effort.⁷⁶ In a national publicity campaign, Houser solicited acclaim from prominent public figures like James A. Michener or Alex Haley, as well as sculptor colleagues and urban planners, Southwestern historians and local writers. He then used the congratulatory correspondence to strengthen his position in negotiations with the city council as well as to advertise his project with potential donors and the general public.⁷⁷

Notwithstanding the initial successes, however, already in 1988 the seeds for future disagreement were planted when Houser prematurely declared himself the designated and

⁷⁴ For the city ordinance that launched "TIF Project Plan Phase I" see Zanetell 28 Mar. 1991. The exceptionally generous financial framework later concerned many commentators, e.g. Piña 1990: 2; Herrick 24 May 1998; Baron 2001; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

⁷⁵ Edited by Antonio Piña, the newsletter reported *XII TVC* activities in public relations, fundraising, and technical advice as well as historical documentation, cf. Houser 11 Jan. 1989; Piña 1990. *XII TVC* was recognized as a non-profit corporation in 1994; cf. Delgado 8 July 1996.

⁷⁶ For Quincentennial endorsement see press release of 12 Oct. 1988; Farley-Villalobos 12 Nov. 1988; progress report of 21 Nov. 1988; Piña 1990: 4. When the opportunity for "dramatizing the epic history of the U.S. Southwest" returned with Houser's 1988 proposal, El Paso decision makers rushed to realize it after 'missing out on Borglum' in the 1930s; cf. Leibson 18 Dec. 1988.

⁷⁷ Of this correspondence, at least fourteen letters are collected at UTEP special collections which congratulate Houser on the project or even strongly endorse his initiative. The *XII Travelers Newsletters* quote positive statements from the correspondence; cf. Piña 1990, also Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006. While Ligon (27 Sep. 1990) ridiculed the campaigning, Houser and his volunteer team over the years perfected their public relations efforts, placing press releases with mainly tourism-related publications like *Texas Highways* magazine and *Texas Monthly*, including an occasional outreach to bilingual media of the El Paso region as well as to Ciudad Juárez newspapers. News about the equestrian Oñate sculpture were also directed towards specialized horse-breeders' magazines like *Andalusian* and *Conquistador*. Public relations also comprise a website with regular updates, <http://www.12travelers.org/>, which is remarkably non-interactive.

commissioned artist exclusively responsible for *The XII Travelers* (Farley-Villalobos 12 Nov. 1988, Baron 7 Dec. 2003). In applying for TIF funds for a de facto public art concept, Houser had effectively circumvented the established peer review process for arts commissions. He thus antagonized the local arts community who suspected vested private interest behind Houser's proposal that would exclude the established and long-struggling arts scene from the benefits of much needed public funding.

The difficulties that arose from the confusion of artistic and economic incentives for downtown revitalization prompted the city administration to reconsider its earlier commitment to the *XII Travelers*. Faced with Houser's increasingly aggressive lobbying, newly elected mayor Suzanne Azar (1989-1991) initiated a review process to investigate allegations of favoritism in a project she had inherited from her predecessor (Zanetell 4 Apr. 1991). The issues are debated as much in the lively 1989-1990 correspondence between the artist and Mayor Azar as in the increasingly entrenched opposition between the *XII TVC* and a review committee appointed by the mayor.⁷⁸ Houser's letters to the mayor display these ambiguities: On the one hand, Houser spoke of a "new *vision* for El Paso's future," a "bold *idea*" (to Mayor Azar 29 Sep. 1989, these and all subsequent emphases mine) that he proposed in 1988 as a "*theme* for the revitalization of downtown El Paso" (to Mayor Azar, 18 Oct. 1989) offering to develop "the *artistic expression* of its unique and dramatic past" (to Mayor Azar 29 Sep. 1989) and presenting himself as the artist working in the best interest of city and audience:

The business of the artist is *to dream and create* [...] The XII Travelers is not an elitist art project to be viewed behind closed doors by "the initiated". It is above all a T.I.F. program of urban redevelopment ... which only incidently [sic] happens to be "art" oriented. To my mind what needs to be considered here is our potential audience, tourists and city residents; and our goal, the publicity and economic success our city stands to gain. (to Mayor Azar 29 Sep. 1989, emphasis mine)

On the other hand, Houser insisted that his "incidentally" art-oriented TIF proposal be considered a fully developed, proprietary "sculpture theme park project" for which he artistically and conceptually held the copyright (to Mayor Azar 18 Oct. 1989). Furthermore, to him the acceptance of the proposal by TIF Board and City Council constituted a contractual commitment: "It is very obvious that that proposal was *a commission* for an integrated sculpture walk in downtown El Paso with the work to be done under my supervision and artistic direction" (to Mayor Azar 18 Oct. 1989, emphasis mine). Under no circumstances was the "integrated concept [...] to developing what will be a major public art work of

⁷⁸ The correspondence changed in tone on Houser's side from accommodating to pressuring between Sep. 1989 and May 1990. On the confrontation of Volunteer and review committees see Farley-Villalobos 13 Oct. 1989.

international significance” to be mistaken as a theme for a potential “series of projects with open competitions for each grouping” (to Mayor Azar 18 Oct. 1989).⁷⁹ During this phase, the conflict of interest inherent to the TIF designation surfaced in public discussion and, taken as a theme for downtown revitalization, planning *The XII Travelers* was stuck between public art and urban redevelopment.⁸⁰

In her comprehensive report on the first years of the project, Myra Zanetell assumes that a misunderstanding about funding between artist and city gave rise to the difficulties. It made Houser proceed in good faith after initial acceptance of the project in May 1988, and that caused some city representatives to feel an “implied contractual obligation” (18 Apr. 1991).⁸¹ However, the artist’s continued maneuvering of his proposal between the terminology and proceedings of public art commissions and urban planning suggest that he may have dealt with the city less innocently. The progress reports of 1988 and 1989 resemble statements of intention rather than descriptions of actual project development.⁸² Before the mayor initiated a review process in fall 1989 and despite repeated consultation with the TIF board, artist and city had not been able to reach a contractual agreement because central required features of the project – such as an active foundry and studio as tax-generating

⁷⁹ Media reports and correspondence with the city offer ample evidence that no contractual obligations for either party had resulted from acceptance of Houser’s proposal by the TIF Board and City Council. While the mayor had repeatedly reminded Houser that there existed no binding contract (Mayor to Houser 25 Sep. 1989; Mayor to Houser 1 Nov. 1989), Houser insisted on his being the designated artist for the project and proceeded with his sculpting (Houser to Mayor 18 Oct. 1989; McGregor [Houser’s lawyer] to Mayor 13 Sep. 1989). Secured by his lawyer in a meeting on 28 Mar. 1990, the artist defended his proposal as already incorporated into a master plan and argued that the city was obliged to fulfill its “responsibilities” – that resulted from his own (premature and unsolicited) advance efforts; cf. Houser to Mayor 1 May 1990.

⁸⁰ Bujanda (29 Mar. 1991) criticizes that the project appeared to be supported by special interest groups. Zanetell (28 Mar. 1991; 16 May 1991) cites criticism of the “underhanded way” in which *The XII Travelers* had “slid quietly into the city through the back door” in a manner unsuitable for a serious art project. In a laconic commentary that posits the issue of money as the bottom line of Houser’s proposal, Bujanda (22 Mar. 1991) wipes out all claims to innocence on the part of the *XII Travelers* project with its enormous budget that in Chamber of Commerce prose claims “to embrace and promote Hispanic culture in our community” while in fact “[S]omeone decided to sell this project as an economic-development project rather than an arts endeavor, because that was the only way they could get funding.” Baron (Oct. 1990; 7 Dec. 2003) offers sarcastic retrospectives on the project’s history insinuating “back-room deals,” ineptitude and corruption. His view is secured by further commentary indicting the workings of the “buddy system”; cf. Segal 18 Sep. 1990; Ligon 27 Sep. 1990.

⁸¹ Houser complained about miscommunication between him and the review committee in several letters to Mayor Azar (6 Dec. 1989; 11 Mar. 1990; 29 Mar. 1990).

⁸² By June 1989, central elements of the project such as the foundry and funding as well as a contract for the artist to present to the city and the formation of a team of artists had not proceeded beyond the planning stage. Not surprisingly, an active foundry in the downtown area that would have qualified the project for TIF was found incompatible with zoning and environmental regulations, cf. Zanetell 28 Mar. 1991; 4 Apr. 1991.

elements, planning deadlines or matching funds – had been deleted from the proposal, not been met, or flatly rejected.⁸³

While the appointed review committee was supportive of the content matter of Houser's project – “a plan to create a cycle of twelve monumental sculpture groupings by Mr. Hauser [sic] illustrating the rich cultural heritage of the Southwest” – they questioned important technicalities like design sketches or size and location and severely criticized the artist's proceeding with the city, especially in view of the issues of funding and tax-generating elements. Citing a lack of economic justifications to publicly fund the project and taking up on the artistic focus of Houser's proposal, the review committee suggested to treat it like a public art proposal and to have it enter into juried competition for public funds.⁸⁴ Yet when Houser learned of the review process, he alleged intrigue and jealousy:

Enclosed with your [the mayor's] letter was a list of members of a review committee and I recognize among them the names of several individuals who have tried to discredit and defeat The XII Travelers since its inception. The recommendations of such people seem more likely to 'kill' the project than make it 'come to life.' (to Mayor Azar 29 Sep. 1989)

The review committee early in 1990 recommended to reconsider the TIF eligibility of *The XII Travelers* given the alterations made to the original proposal and the development of the project up to that point. Subsequently, the mayor put the project on hold, even though she assured the sculptor that she, too, was supportive of the concept: “My basic feeling about this project is that it is a good idea that could be considered at some time in the future to be feasible” (to John Houser 4 May 1990).⁸⁵ Apparently anticipating the decision publicized by the mayor on May 24, 1990, Houser suspected a conspiracy on the part of the review committee and offered an ultimatum to the city: “I have endeavored to proceed with the city on this basis without response. Your committee, in my opinion is doing nothing more than attempting to subvert the project” (to Mayor Azar 29 Mar. 1990). He referred to his economic commitment in order to further pressure the city to accord to his wishes:

I am sure it is obvious to you that the last two and a half years of my life have been dedicated to the success of this project and that I cannot continue to sustain myself in limbo indefinitely without income. [...] If we are not involved in negotiations [...] by June, 1990, I must assume

⁸³ On disagreement about funding, missed deadlines and other obstacles see Olvera 26 May 1990; 17 June 1990; Perez 1 Aug. 1990. Farley-Villalobos (12 Nov. 1988) reports on consultations between Houser and the TIF board as to the release of funds. On a matching funds requirement for TIF proposals see Viescas 11 Mar. 1990; on the public-private character of the city ordinance which required the TIF funds to be augmented by US \$ 2.7 million from unspecified other sources see Baron 7 Dec. 2003.

⁸⁴ See “Recommendation for the Mayor on Twelve Travelers” (n.d.); report by Mayor's Review Committee (25 Sep. 1989). Furthermore, Juárez (17 Jan. 1991) presented a reasoned critique of the feasibility of the project based on considerations of economic impact and further maintenance and offered a multi-faceted outline for a potential arts endowment in the context of a much needed formal public arts policy and cultural plan for El Paso.

⁸⁵ Cf. also Olvera 26 May 1990; Perez 1 Aug. 1990; XII TVC “An Analysis” 1990.

that the city has elected to abandon the XII Travelers project. [...] How a city like El Paso could abandon a good project, which is fully funded and ready to go, in response to a small number of jealous detractors, particularly when it epitomizes the theme of revitalization and incorporates our rich Native American and Hispanic heritage, is beyond my comprehension. (to Mayor Azar 1 May 1990)

Houser once again managed to mobilize public opinion in his favor and even enlisted artist Tom Lea III for a prominent and resonating statement of support (30 July 1990) on all counts called into question by his critics. Under the leadership of the *XII TVC*, a flurry of Letters to the Editor was published that protested the alleged termination of the project. Orchestrated support culminated in the proclamation of a “Save the Twelve Travelers Day!” on July 31, 1990, on the eve of another council meeting on the future of *The XII Travelers Memorial* (Farley-Villalobos 2 Aug. 1990).⁸⁶

At that phase, discussion about the theme of the project gave way to disagreement over funding principles as it was discussed in council meetings as either public art or infrastructural improvement with a historic theme. In public debate, however, the different procedural approaches erupted as a hostile conflict between critics and supporters of the proposal, who accused each other of “elitism” and “racism,” incompetence and intrigue (Zanetell 4 Apr. 1991).⁸⁷ The issue of who should benefit from the money set aside by TIF only thinly disguised other questions implicated in Houser’s project: What role should public art projects play in the social fabric of El Paso? Who would be given an opportunity to present their interpretation of the past? Who would make the choices and whose vision of history and identity would be monumentally endorsed?

II.1.3 1988-1992: CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE ARTS COMMUNITY

After the city administration articulated its principal willingness to support public art in El Paso by resolving the funding conundrum provoked by Houser’s project, the arts community became more explicit with their suggestions for the role of arts in downtown revitalization.

⁸⁶ The letters available at UTEP Special Collections mostly greeted the tourism potential that *The XII Travelers* would offer El Paso; cf. Lutz 14 June 1990 and 17 June 1990; Hoylen 13 July 1990; Torres 13 July 1990; Wilson 13 Aug. 1990. Other letter writers praised the talent and vision of the artist and cited a need for art in El Paso; cf. Conway c. 5 May 1990; Porter 1 July 1990; Gandara 29 July 1990; Lea 30 July 1990. Some expressed admiration of the monumental theme and scope of a “memorial celebrating the great history and culture of the Southwest” through statues dedicated to “larger than life heroes”; cf. Hoylen 5 May 1990 and 13 July 1990.

⁸⁷ While voices from the public expressed a more general understanding of the project, the *XII TVC* simultaneously went public with a detailed and belligerent rejection of the findings publicized by the mayor’s review committee, accusing it of incompetence and intrigue against Houser; cf. “An Analysis” and “Let’s Set the Record Straight!” (c. July 1990). Criticism of the project in Letters to the Editor was rare and rather appeared in editorials or alternative papers, but see Jenkins 15 Aug. 1990 for questions of appropriate form and choice in the sculpture walk, or Segal (18 Sep. 1990) and Ligon (27 Sep. 1990) for criticism of Houser’s circumventing juried competition. Baron (Oct. 1990) provided a critical commentary in an alternative city arts paper while Romo (27 Nov. 1990) used *The Prospector*, a university paper, for his outspoken critique of the project.

Prominent representatives like gallerist Adair W. Margo took up the idea of “a city-funded public arts endowment [that] would become a model for the entire country” (Margo to Mayor Azar 12 Sep. 1990). They envisioned site-specific projects cooperatively developed by artists, architects and urban planners in the context of a “more dynamic Arts in Public Places program, providing a living legacy for our city” and committed to professional standards.⁸⁸

Houser’s allegations of jealousy and intentional detraction point to a deep rift between him and the El Paso arts community which was beginning to divide the urban community as well.⁸⁹ As early as 1988, nationally acclaimed Chicano sculptor Luis Jimenez had raised critical issues based on aesthetic and procedural concerns: He deplored the lack of originality and site-specificity of the project itself, disapproved of the absence of a professional selection process as well as the confusion of economic and artistic funding responsibilities and accused Houser of presenting an excessive budget to the city. Jimenez instead suggested to “set up a percentage for a public art program that would benefit the entire community by dispersing projects throughout the city” in a city endowment for the arts. Houser flatly rejected Jimenez’s criticism, insisting on his exclusive right to determine both the theme and selection of historic figures notwithstanding the imitative borrowing from the form and spirit of Lea’s *Calendar*. Although he had advertised the sculpture project for the artistic leadership it would impart to the city, he rejected criticism of the project’s aesthetic.⁹⁰ Instead, he insisted that the *XII Travelers* project represented “a memorial and a dramatic anchor for the *revitalization* of Downtown El Paso” (Olvera 18 Mar. 1990, emphasis mine) and that such embellishment contributing to downtown redevelopment ought to be exempted from the usual selection process for art in public places. He likewise ignored Jimenez’s concern about allocating huge sums to a single project as well as challenges to his standing as an artist, and refused to acknowledge the disproportionate budget as much as the professional need to expose the project to juried competition within a respectable community of El Paso artists.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See also Jimenez (15 July 1988) and Juárez (17 Jan. 1991) for support of an endowment. Ligon (27 Sep. 1990) discussed the need for competition in the light of the artist’s merit. Art critic Richard Baron (Oct. 1990) offered an acerbic critique of Houser’s self-fashioning and intimidation strategies employed in dealing with the city.

⁸⁹ Sculptor Madero de la Pena (letter to the mayor ca. Apr. 1991) lamented the absence of collegiality, cooperation and competition in Houser’s proposal that would not only hurt the project itself, but also harm the El Paso arts community. Cf. also Zanetell 4 Apr. 1991; 18 Apr. 1991; Olvera 26 May 1990.

⁹⁰ I use the term ‘aesthetic’ for the artistic strategies and organizing principles that inform a work of public art.

⁹¹ Jimenez 15 July 1988; see also Farley-Villalobos (12 Nov. 1988). The publicized exchange of opinions between Jimenez and Houser remained a singular event and never evolved into a dialogue between Houser and his artist colleagues in El Paso. Only much later did Houser respond to the challenges to his artistic originality and rephrase his indebtedness to Lea’s *Calendar*: “As the concept unrolled it was natural that Tom Lea’s ‘Twelve Travelers’ should come to mind. Tom, appreciating both the similarity of Houser’s vision to his own as well as its originality, generously endorsed the concept and allowed the name of his historic publication to serve as the eponymous title for his huge undertaking. [...] Although the two concepts share the same alliterative title, the

Neither procedural nor aesthetic critique was ever taken up by Houser and even the alterations Houser suggested following a decisive consultation between him, his lawyer, and the mayor, in March 1990 were rather inconsiderate of his critics' objections.⁹² While the funds designated for *The XII Travelers* required a reliable project framework in order to be released, Houser was most concerned about his authorship and copyright of the entire project.⁹³ He likewise remained convinced that his project would record the past free of any statement of judgment, irritating his critics with the apparently naïve statement "[y]ou can't revise history – there were good things and bad things that happened" (Houser qtd. in Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992). He described his role alternatively as "*depicting* with heroic sculpture the men, women, and events that shaped our destiny" (Houser to Azar 15 Nov. 1989, emphasis mine) or as presenting as accurately as possible "the history of the area with all the conflict and drama" (Houser qtd. in Romo 27 Nov. 1990) and thus "*recording* history in bronze" (Houser qtd. in Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992, emphasis mine). Houser alienated even moderate critics when he retrospectively brushed away concern about the aesthetics involved in his project contending "[Y]ou just can't pay attention to that sort of thing" (Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006).

By mostly keeping apart from his artist colleagues, Houser further confirmed some of his critics' suspicions that he had devised a clever way to find funding.⁹⁴ To the arts community, the sculptor's position was untenable, as Margo's very explicit rebuttal indicates:

This project has never gone through the proper approval process for public art. I believe when public monies are spent, there should be a guarantee that they are spent in the wisest manner possible, and that the best artist for the project be selected. Cost should be appropriate, and the project should be an integral part of the plan for downtown. [...] I'm opposed to giving a blank check to a single artist without the proper public process of selection. (Margo qtd. in Zanetell 18 Apr. 1991)

Thus, while the theme for the *XII Travelers* project invited wide-ranging commitment to celebrating "the rich history and cultural heritage of [a] plural society" ("Let's Set the Record Straight!") and might have offered an opportunity to unite critics and supporters of Houser's proposal, the artist's attitude towards his critics and city officials provoked a split into opposing camps within the urban community already during the first phase of the project (1988-1992). Resentment of the underhanded way in which the *XII Travelers* had been launched as well as disagreement over the appropriate expression and interpretation of the theme of 'heritage' – whether to celebrate an edifying history in didactic sculpture or whether

"Twelve Travelers" of Tom Lea and the "XII Travelers" of John Houser are as individual as the artists themselves"; cf. <http://www.12travelers.org/XIITravelers/Introduction/TomLeaLegacy/tabid/92/Default.aspx>.

⁹² Houser 21 Nov. 1988; Houser 11 Jan. 1989.

⁹³ Cf. Eroles 3 Aug. 1990; Zanetell 18 Apr. 1991; Farley-Villalobos 1 Oct. 1991.

⁹⁴ Cf. Baron Oct. 1990; Bujanda 29 Mar. 1991; Baron 6 Dec. 1992.

to provide spaces to reflect on diverse interpretations of the past through more innovative media of public art – kindled a conflict that revealed deep ideological divisions with regard to the role assigned art in bridging past and present. The seeds of conflict actually evolved into the entrenched opposition that would characterize the controversy about Oñate at a later stage in the project.

II.1.4 1990-1992: COLUMBUS APPROACHING

Between 1990 and 1992, although funding remained a central issue the debate returned to addressing a historic theme in public art. Public opinion on the issue of art proposals in urban revitalization changed considerably and the initial enthusiasm gave way to the opinion that for a city struggling to provide its citizens with such basic necessities as health, education and housing public art was an unwarranted extra expense (Spinnier 19 Dec. 1993; Wittrock 19 Dec. 1993).⁹⁵ With the Columbus Quincentennial in mind, the city changed its matching funds philosophy in summer 1990, thus appeasing Houser and his supporters and also enabling the start for nine out of sixteen TIF projects ranging from street improvement and historic preservation to a new art museum complex.⁹⁶ The council decision to earmark 250,000 dollars for *The XII Travelers* stipulated that Houser begin with the design of two sculptures for the Quincentennial, Cabeza de Vaca and Benito Juarez, while the remaining ten would have to be resubmitted and enter into an open competition. Even though there was still no contractual agreement, the problem of funding appeared temporarily resolved.⁹⁷ The long coveted contract between artist and city was finally drawn on November 4, 1992, and Houser saw his vision for a sculpture path “dedicated to the most distinguished visitors in the history of the Pass of the North” materialize (Flynn 25 Nov. 1992). Yet while Houser was pondering candidates and detailing sites for the first two ‘travelers’ (to be located centrally in front of the Plaza Theatre and Plaza Hotel respectively), an eight-member advisory board as well as

⁹⁵ A series of angry Letters criticized the project for its “unrestrained, unwanted and frivolous expenditure[s] of our tax dollars,” one Letter even dubbed it “the Twelve Trespassers”; Weathers 24 Apr. 1991. Citing a waste of taxpayers’ money, the project was rebuked as disregarding the stated wishes of the community: “[The] 12 Travelers statue project was voted down by the electorate, but [mayor Tilney] defied the taxpayers’ desires by approving the project”; Solomon 17 Dec. 1992. Publicized criticism suggested to use the money for preservation or social projects instead; cf. Price 6 Dec. 1992; Williams 6 Dec. 1992. Critical editorials and reports also cited the slighting of community issues in favor of one-dimensional artistic representation; cf. Romo 1 Nov. 1990.

⁹⁶ Viescas 11 Mar. 1990; “Get Going” 16 June 1990; Eroles 3 Aug. 1990.

⁹⁷ Notwithstanding the artist’s hesitance, the city maintained its commitment to the project; cf. Zanetell 4 Apr. 1991. The TIF Board authorized Mayor and City Council to release funds for the Cabeza de Vaca and the Benito Juarez statues provided that the artist continue the fundraising efforts toward the total cost (US \$ 2.7 million) of the entire project; cf. Farley-Villalobos 1 Oct. 1991; also Jauregi Nov. 1992; Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992; Flynn 25 Nov. 1992. The eventual assignment comprised US \$ 275,000 for the first two sculptures; cf. Farley-Villalobos 1 Oct. 1991; Jauregi Nov. 1992; Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992; Flynn 25 Nov. 1992; Dickson 6 Apr. 1994; Martin 23 May 1995; Herrick 24 May 1998; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Flynn 10 Nov. 2003.

critics of the project kept asking pertinent questions as to the selection and placement of the respective historical figures. While procedural issues had been resolved, the overarching theme of the project resurfaced and subsequently made the debate increasingly complex.⁹⁸

II.2.1 1992-1998: “PICK THE RIGHT TWELVE TRAVELERS TO STAND DOWNTOWN”⁹⁹

Before 1992, the individual characters to be represented had taken a secondary role as “[m]ost of the debate so far [had] focused on whether the city should proceed with the Twelve Travelers project – not on *which* travelers should be honored” (“Maybe 12 Travelers” 2 Dec. 1992, emphasis in original). While the question of financial responsibility continued to haunt the considerably reduced proposal even after 1992 – now sometimes ironically dubbed *The Two Travelers* – discussion about the project began to focus on the issue of selection. The Columbus Quincentennial had fundamentally shaken widely shared assumptions about ‘honoring’ the colonial past and its protagonists. The anniversary therefore further complicated the search for “historic figure heads” which, according to Houser, might serve to explain each period in El Paso history from Cabeza de Vaca’s exploration to Pancho Villa’s revolution.¹⁰⁰

The public debate about selection of characters for *The XII Travelers* took up the proverbial rationale to ‘educate or entertain’ through exemplary civic characters as well as raucous Old West figures like gunfighter John Wesley Hardin or revolutionary Pancho Villa. Both Hardy and Villa already firmly occupied sites in the collective memories of El Paso and had become well-established tourist attractions.¹⁰¹ El Pasoans seemed indeed most concerned about halting further decline of their city and about shedding the image of a border “boot town” or “sin city,” if necessary by way of presenting a glorious Spanish colonial past. The desire to “lift Lithium City from the village class and make it a magnet for visitors from around the world” (Apostolides 26 July 1990) and to attract tourists to a revitalized downtown with a spectacularly presented historic theme found almost unreserved backing in publicized opinion. A themed commercial infrastructure of cafés, restaurants and small shops suggested a tourist potential similar to the one successfully triggered by the River Walk in San Antonio, TX. Thus turning downtown El Paso into a “a very important and economically viable people

⁹⁸ Jauregi first mentioned the advisory board formed to resolve questions of selection and location; Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992. The choice of characters was discussed in Farley-Villalobos 1 Oct. 1991; Jauregi Nov. 1992; Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992; Flynn 25 Nov. 1992; Martin 23 May 1995. Potential locations were pondered in Jauregi Nov. 1992 and 25 Nov. 1992; Flynn 25 Nov. 1992; Martin 23 May 1995.

⁹⁹ Metz 29 Nov. 1992.

¹⁰⁰ See Houser in Romo 27 Nov. 1990; Houser in Jauregi Nov. 1992; also Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006.

¹⁰¹ Local historian Leon Metz considers Hardin’s grave “one of the city’s most popular tourist spots, a sort of Wild West monument.” He also opined that “men dominated El Paso’s history”; qtd. in Herrick 24 May 1998.

place [...] providing historical insight, [...] beauty, comfort and places to accommodate people activities” if accompanied “by things to do, see, and enjoy” was greeted as a viable, if ambitious vision (Robert L. Frazer to Duffy Stanley 5 Apr. 1990) thematically “based upon your most precious resource, El Paso’s history” (David J. Straus to Mayor Azar and Citizens of El Paso 21 Mar. 1990).¹⁰²

In the debate over selection, a catalog of historic “personalities that best describe the development of the Southwest” (Houser) emerged that revolved around a core of seven figures and was variously augmented in response to critical intervention.¹⁰³ The issue of who had authority to declare which figures “were important to our history as a community and as a people” (Piña qtd. in Olvera 16 Jan. 1991) was never openly discussed. Yet invoking the different eras of early community building inevitably led to questions of who belonged to the community. The latent issue of identity had thus eventually surfaced in the contentious debate about the *XII Travelers* project, and it forced proponents and critics to address the ways in which interethnic relations and the negotiation of identities materialized in El Paso and could be shaped in the future. Not surprisingly, the Hispanic community strongly responded to the question of representative historic characters. Antonio Piña of the *XII TVC* embraced the project as a long overdue recognition of the “significant Hispanic contributions” to national history and identity building. He claimed the first 400 years of history in the Southwest exclusively for Hispanics, arguing that the project was designed to “celebrate us [i.e., Hispanics] and our culture” (Olvera 18 Mar. 1990). The celebration of history and culture would inspire pride and self-esteem especially among the younger generation and would serve towards “unifying the community in making Hispanics an integral part of our city” (Olvera 18 Mar. 1990).¹⁰⁴ So encompassing was Piña’s eagerness to gain the support of all, not just

¹⁰² Cf. Piña 9 Nov. 1990. Landscape architects Frazer and Straus had been involved in planning San Antonio’s River Walk and congratulated both the artist and the city on the idea for a “master planned and controlled historic district”; Robert L. Frazer to Duffy Stanley 5 Apr. 1990. For further endorsement see also Robert L. Frazer to John Houser 24 Apr. 1990. As usual, Houser used the enthusiasm expressed by Straus and Frazer to advertise his proposal with the Mayor; cf. John Houser to Mayor Suzie Azar 26 Feb. 1990. Herrick returned to the reference to San Antonio’s River Walk at a later date (24 May 1998).

¹⁰³ In 1990, the *XII TVC* suggested a cast of characters modeled on Tom Lea’s *Calendar* (1947) (central figures are underlined): Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, Gaspar Castano de Sosa, Oñate, Fray Garcia, Diego de Vargas as well as Zebulon Pike and Santa Fe trader James Wiley Magoffin. Fray Agustin Rodriguez or Antonio de Espejo, both early explorers, as well as frontier era characters like Alexander Doniphan or ‘Big Foot Wallace’ were replaced by nationally more resonating names: Francisco Vasquez de Coronado for the colonial period, Benito Pablo Juarez and Pancho Villa for the democratic and revolutionary eras respectively; cf. Crowder 1 Mar. 1988, Piña Apr. 1990, Piña Aug. 1990, Olvera 17 June 1990; Melendrez Oct. 1990.

¹⁰⁴ The revisioning of Hispanic history and identity was given emphatic endorsement: “For the first time in our history, the City of El Paso can make an important contribution to the self-image of Hispanics in the Southwest and throughout the United States”; Olvera 18 Mar. 1990. The *XII TVC* successfully orchestrated support in Letters to the Editor that expressed the party line of “significant historic and cultural contributions” (Maldonado

Hispanic, El Pasoans that he initially even subsumed vocal protest by Chicano activists against the glorification of “murdering Spaniards” as the project’s potential to “create dialogue” and “generate discussion” about the history of the area (Piña qtd. in Olvera 16 Jan. 1991). Project proponents continued to use the argument of “Hispanic contributions” to justify proposing further characters irrespective of their ties to El Paso proper, elevating the historical theme to symbolic significance for “all” Hispanics in the United States. Their claim to representativeness complicated the selection of further characters.¹⁰⁵

Further prominent spokespersons from the El Paso cultural scene balanced Piña’s overly enthusiastic endorsement with more moderate approval: Columnist, poet and social activist Richardo Sánchez rang a conciliatory, humanist note when he reminded the contending factions that “Statues and monumental works help us reflect on our pasts, on the value of individual and community experiences, and we learn of the great human value of our ancestors, not just about one race or group, but about all the universal human beings who have given meaning to the world.”¹⁰⁶ However, while he tried to create a middle ground where memories might unite rather than antagonize the different groups within the community, his voice was coopted by the *XII TVC* for the simplistic slogan “Honor the past to build the future” (e.g. Best 27 Nov. 1995, Houser 1996: 7). Yet the *XII TVC*’s pluralistic vision on the past was incongruent both with Sanchez’s universal humanist stance and with the less compromising Chicano perspective. While Sanchez pointed to the limitations implied in focusing on ‘historic contributions’ in the face of “a greater and grander *mestizo* human reality than we acknowledge” (Sanchez 21 Jan. 1991),¹⁰⁷ critical Chicano voices pointed to the amnesia involved in selectively honoring an imagined Spanish colonial past. Mario Chavarria of the *Congreso Chicano de la Comunidad* emphasized the pitting of allegedly Spanish against Mexican traditions: “U.S. society has a record of ignoring our Mexican heritage by pretending to celebrate Spanish culture. But we are not Spaniards. In an area that is over 70 percent Mexican ... this minority inclusion is clearly a token effort to give credibility to [Houser’s] project” (qtd. in Romo 27 Nov. 1990; also Romo 1 Nov. 1990).

Houser claimed that identity was no central concern of his project, although commentary shows that *The XII Travelers* was read as a statement on ethnic diversity that

26 Mar. 1990; Olvera 18 Mar. 1990) and the need to celebrate “the great history and culture of the Southwest” (Hoylen 5 May 1990; Lutz 14 June 1990 and 17 June 1990; Torres 13 July 1990).

¹⁰⁵ McDonnell 18 Oct. 1995; Herrick 24 May 1998; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

¹⁰⁶ Sanchez 6 Aug. 1990; the quote recalls a conversation with his colleague Roberto Barcena.

¹⁰⁷ Sanchez’s convictions extended to a pan-American concept of *mestizaje* that also involved the merging of European ethnicities into “one great enjoining of bloods, races, and languages.” Yet both the significance he attributed to *mestizaje* and the role he envisioned for culture – as an “avenue to dialogue” towards “someday accepting our mutual humanity” – remained unacknowledged in the debate (Sanchez 21 Jan. 1991).

might serve to “place Southwestern Hispanics, women, blacks and Native Americans in their proper historical perspectives” (Olvera 18 Mar. 1990). As early as 1990, the project was publicly criticized for its conspicuous absence of minorities, its lack of twentieth-century as well as immigrant and working class characters.¹⁰⁸ Yet in Houser’s interpretation, “minority inclusion” was provided for in the representation of an African American, Estebanico, as part of the planned sculpture group arranged around Cabeza de Vaca, as well as in the figure of Benito Juarez who was to simultaneously represent Mexican politics and Mexico’s roots in ancient Native American tradition (cf. Olvera 18 Mar. 1990; Melendrez Oct. 1990; Hippenstiel 15 Feb. 1991). Houser and the *XII TVC* remained oblivious to the fact that their project tended to homogenize the diversity within the Hispanic community, and they also neglected further ethnic, social and gender factors that might have determined the historical experiences of El Pasoans. When the discussion carried on to address issues of selecting appropriate characters, Houser himself confirmed the charges of ethnic and cultural insensitivity by suggesting to mend the glaring omission of twentieth-century history and of class and gender issues through “a thirteenth figure that will represent an anonymous Mexican maid or an immigrant to represent that part of history” (Romo 27 Nov. 1990; Apostolides 12 July 1990; Chavarria qtd. in Jauregi 25 Nov. 1992). But when Houser was accused of disregarding historical (and present) diversity in *The XII Travelers*, issues of moral judgment and authentic representation of the past entered into the debate, pitting so-called historical accuracy against so-called political correctness (Houser 1996: 7).

Five years into the debate about selection, the project Houser’s project had abandoned the intimations of *mestizaje* of his first proposal and it accommodated the ethnic and gender bias at most superficially (McDonnel 18 Oct. 1995; “Unique 12 Travelers” 27 Oct. 1995). In reaction to the critique, a female Apache warrior named Lozen and Pueblo Revolt leader Popé had been added to the catalog to amend the absence of ethnic minorities and women (Piña Aug. 1990), secunded by the suggestion to include Susan Shelby Magoffin or Lt. Henry Ossian Flipper, first African American graduate of West Point Military Academy.¹⁰⁹ Despite weak attempts to do justice to the omitted groups or to focus on decidedly local characters, the full catalog from which to select twelve *Travelers* eventually comprised thirty-three historic characters, the majority of which were white and male.¹¹⁰ Beyond attracting ‘history buffs’

¹⁰⁸ Chavarria qtd. in Romo 27 Nov. 1990; cf. also Maldonado 26 Mar. 1990; Apostolides 12 July 1990.

¹⁰⁹ Flynn 25 Nov. 1992; Metz 29 Nov. 1992; Martin 23 May 1995; Abram 2001.

¹¹⁰ Metz (29 Nov. 1992) and journalist Patrick McDonnel (18 Oct. 1995) suggested further names in order to strengthen the link between place and historical personages and simultaneously maintain tourist appeal, including architect and urban planner Anson Mills, several El Paso business pioneers, and gunfighter John Wesley Hardin. In 1996, before the inauguration of the first ‘traveler,’ the Franciscan lay brother Garcia, a citizens’ advisory committee deplored the absence of African Americans, women, or Native Americans among *The XII*

and heritage tourists and expressing the civic spirit, the *XII Travelers* sculpture project was to initiate a learning experience and eventually to reconcile the different groups within the community under a common vision. Project proponents as well as opponents required the cast of historic characters to serve the double function of (re)building a Hispanic identity and of acknowledging the presence of other minorities in the region. Yet Houser's *XII Travelers* project also triggered an ambivalent debate about what one commentator called "fairness to minorities, and the idea of honoring killers" (McDonnell 18 Oct. 1995). Critics unrelentingly pointed to the symbolism implied in public commemoration that represented "colonization, suffering and oppression to Native Americans"¹¹¹ in a monument that disregarded the plight and concerns of marginalized groups. Instead, they called for sensitivity towards "the indigenous and Mexican Americans who have not been treated fairly in history."¹¹² Already in the selection of historic figures, commodification of the past had prevailed over the individual characters' merits. When the image and figure of Oñate entered into the debate, the conflict of interest intensified, pitting a didactic intent that called for edifying examples against historic themes selected with regard to audience appeal. Yet Houser rejected moral implications and defended his choices with authoritarian fervor: "[...] *they're not supposed to see a statue of a hero who was really an awful person. They're supposed to see that the monument stands for a certain period in the history of the Pass of the North*" (Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006, emphases mine; also Abram 5 June 1994).

II.2.2 OÑATE APPROACHING

Closer attention to space and the impending Oñate anniversary (1998) determined the further course of the project: With a decided emphasis on El Paso history and a bow to his Hispanic-only supporters, Houser reconsidered his earlier plans and suggested to initiate the project with sculptures dedicated to Fray Garcia de San Francisco, the founder of the mission in Ciudad Juarez (1659), and to Juan de Oñate, conquistador of New Mexico (1598).¹¹³ Yet after

Travelers, and expressed their unease with the token inclusion of minorities. Even as late as 1998 there was no agreement which additional 'travelers' to select; cf. Herrick 24 May 1998. In 2001, Abram synthesized a list that tried to balance historical 'color' and the recognition of diversity: Beginning with a multiethnic Cabeza de Vaca group, it comprised Oñate, Garcia, and a group of Native American refugees from the Pueblo Revolt to indicate the Spanish period. The nineteenth century was represented in the Magoffin family, Juan Batista de Anza, Juan Maria Ponce de Leon (founder of the first El Paso settlement north of the Rio Grande), Benito Juárez, Lozen, Flipper, Hardin and Pancho Villa.

¹¹¹ Gilberto Telles qtd. in "Controversial Statue" 4 Nov. 2003; cf. also Chapman 16 Nov. 2003.

¹¹² El Paso Muralist Carlos Callejo qtd. in Flynn 10 Nov. 2003; cf. also Chicano historian Oscar Martinez in Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

¹¹³ See Dickson 6 Apr. 1994; Martin 23 May 1995. A model of the Oñate sculpture was first presented in the artist's studio in late 1991 and approved by the City Council in March 1993; see Nelson 29 Dec. 1991; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Flynn 10 Nov. 2003.

the Columbus Quincentennial, conquistador commemoration had become even more contentious than before and research indicated that uncritical glorification of Oñate's merits was not supported by his historical record. Therefore, a sculpture dedicated to the less controversial Franciscan lay brother Garcia inaugurated the *XII Travelers* series on September 26, 1996, in El Paso's Pioneer Plaza (Fig. 5).¹¹⁴ It was better suited to official policy as city officials wanted public historic statuary to imbue the cityscape of El Paso with "history, art and a permanent sense of civic pride" ("Debut" 30 Sep. 1996). Consequently, many observers of the project development welcomed the Garcia sculpture as the beginning of "a new era for Downtown El Paso, [...] an exciting renaissance" (Lymbird 1996: 2). For project proponents, sense of place manifested itself in a public sculpture that affirmed the inextricable link between past and present: It gave material form to the notion of a dynamic history as the essence of El Paso, and represented a tangible acknowledgment of the 'Hispanic contributions' to such a dynamic past in public space.

Houser depicted Fray Garcia in the process of mission building, and thus as laying the foundations for the modern-day binational metropolis as a Christian, agricultural community. His introductory statement on the sculpture invokes an unconflicted past of interethnic cooperation under Spanish leadership: "It is fitting that the first bronze should begin with the founder of the Pass of the North – now modern day Cd. Juarez and El Paso. This Franciscan, visionary and builder, symbolizes the unity of our two great cities."¹¹⁵ However, the attributes he selected for the Garcia sculpture do not exclusively symbolize the religious foundations of the mission, such as the habit and sandals, ornaments, or a beam dedicated to the mission church. Houser also presented Garcia in the pose of a worldly leader, gesturing to call his flock to work as well as to prayer. While this may claim to reflect the factualities of missionary beginnings, the interpretation of Native American-Spanish relations that Houser offered is more problematic: Symbolizing the Native presence in a Manso Indian basket filled

¹¹⁴ Cf. Martin 23 May 1995; Delgado 8 July 1996; "Monument" Sep. 1996: 4; "Debut" 30 Sep. 1996; Herrick 24 May 1998. The Garcia sculpture had been approved in spring 1994 as part of the city's commitment to start the downsized project with two instead of twelve sculptures and with a budget of US \$ 250,000 instead of US \$ 3.7 million; cf. "Artist Gets" 13 Apr. 1994; Flynn 6 May 1994; Abram 5 June 1994. Houser presented a model of the sculpture to the public on December 8, 1994, the anniversary of Garcia's founding and the originally intended date of completion (Abram 5 June 1994). In March 1995, he displayed the maquette (a technical clay model upon which enlargement to full-size is based) in an Open Studio event. The text of the invitation eerily echoes the rhetoric of international agreements like NAFTA in its emphasis on El Paso's "history without borders" and in encouraging El Pasoans to embrace "economic cooperation and international understanding" by celebrating the "mutual past" through *The XII Travelers Memorial*; invitation to Open Studio I. For announcements see also Aguilar 10 Mar. 1995; "Statue" 10 Mar. 1995. As in earlier agreements, both the originally projected cost and the date of completion were not met, continuing what later commentators would describe as a "history of missed deadlines and exploding budgets"; Chapman 16 Nov. 2003; cf. also Baron Jan. 2001.

¹¹⁵ Houser 1996: 8. For further descriptions of the statue modeled on the official releases see also Martin 23 May 1995; Delgado 8 July 1996; "Monument Goes Up" Sep. 1996: 4; Lymbird Sep. 1996: 2.

with mission grapes reduced the idea of (Native American) culture to material production and rendered it meaningful only in concert with the newly introduced agricultural produce. At this point in the project development all vestiges of cultural exchange and ethnic mixing that might have suggested a process of *mestizaje* were factually excised. Also, Houser advertised the sculpture as “the tallest historical bronze in the State of Texas,” and thus already foreshadowed his argumentation in favor of Oñate – that it was necessary to find an artistic language commensurate with a “unique and monumental past” and to render “the concept of a giant” in material form.¹¹⁶ From this point onwards, Houser’s rhetoric combined the celebration of colonial beginnings with his creed of monumentalism that would culminate in the oversized Oñate project.

The debate about selecting appropriate representative figures and, especially after the Oñate Cuatrocenenario of 1998, the controversy over the conquistador’s significance for El Paso address the ways in which people connect with the past and come to know history. Inevitably, employing concepts like ‘discovery’ and ‘conquest’ or dichotomies like ‘civilization vs. savagery’ as well as the reference to stock figures like conquistadors, founders, outlaws and ‘shady ladies’ already entail interpretation that determines how the past is emplotted, i.e. how and by whom information about the past is communicated. Thus making and debating history is entangled in issues of power and group interest which keep debatants from explicitly addressing the complex ties by which the past reaches into the present (cf. Leyva and Shepherd 27 Jan. 2004). Public commemoration rarely achieves the impartial “recognition of history” that John Houser likes to attribute to his proposal (cf. Sanchez 25 Sep. 2005, Callejo in Flynn 10 Nov. 2003). Especially when they embrace the glorification of heroes as a strategy to build social status for a group, memory makers tend to ignite discord rather than contributing to a better understanding of the past in the present.

II.3.1 1998-2007: NO PLACE FOR OÑATE?

With Houser’s energy focused on two instead of twelve sculptures following the downsizing of the *XII Travelers* concept in 1992, the Oñate project developed a dynamic of its own that threatened to overthrow the whole *XII Travelers* concept and transcend the limits of downtown revitalization. Houser became increasingly obsessed with the sculpture’s size, enlarging it to colossal proportions. Yet an oversized equestrian statue was no longer compatible with plans for downtown redevelopment and the change provoked a lengthy debate about alternative locations and reintroduced the issue of funding. Additionally, subsequent project development suffered from regular delays and ever-rising cost that

¹¹⁶ Qtd. in “Announcement” 27 Nov. 1995; Houser 1996: 6; cf. also Delgado 8 July 1996.

culminated in a threat of bankruptcy in 2003. In a dramatic council meeting in November 2003, it was decided to rename the sculpture and relocate it to the airport.

Houser had already taxed the patience of city officials with the Garcia statue that arrived late and at five-fold expense to the city.¹¹⁷ The “history of missed deadlines and exploding budgets” (Chapman 16 Nov. 2003) continued with the Oñate sculpture which had originally been scheduled for dedication in April 1998 to commemorate the First Thanksgiving in El Paso in the year of the Cuatrocenenario.¹¹⁸ In the meantime, Houser privately decided to enlarge the size of the equestrian Oñate in order to surpass both a George Washington statue in Philadelphia and the so-called Da Vinci horse in Milan, Italy. From an originally planned twenty-one foot statue Houser’s Oñate grew to thirty-six.¹¹⁹ As evident in Houser’s lonely decision about size, the City of El Paso had again been unable to bind the artist to any kind of contractual obligation, including budget and spending. Irritated about the apparently systematic pattern of delays as well as the sculpture’s incompatibility with downtown redevelopment, the city council briefly considered withdrawal from the overall project in 2001.¹²⁰ With the figure of Oñate domineering over the whole project, *The XII Travelers* and El Paso became more closely entangled in political activism along the Rio Grande. After the Cuatrocenenario of 1998, controversy about Oñate at the sites in Alcalde and Albuquerque complicated the celebration of ‘the past’ and of ‘heritage.’ The repercussions of the Oñate controversy made Houser’s project and city council meetings a target for social critique and political demonstrations. While it had heretofore not figured large in El Paso, commentators suggest that the controversy eased the motion to terminate further city endorsement for Houser’s project and helped to restate under-reflected approval

¹¹⁷ For reports on the excessive cost see Baron 2001; Fenton 27 July 2003; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Chapman 16 Nov. 2003. Flynn (6 May 1994) reports that projected cost for the Garcia sculpture ran to US \$ 55,000. Baron (Jan. 2001) cites expenses of US \$ 241,000, comprising most of the public money allocated for the first two sculptures (US \$ 275,000) and none of the funds allegedly privately raised by the artist and his team of volunteers. Wilson (5 Nov. 2003) and Flynn (10 Nov. 2003) report that in 1997 the city paid for a maquette (US \$ 20,625) as well as, in 2001, for enlargement (US \$ 41,250). An overall cost estimate can be found on the project website, cf. <http://www.12travelers.org/XIITravelers/Introduction/ProjectHistory>. The initially proposed US \$ 500,000 for the Oñate statue pale in view of the eventual cost that is expected to run to over US \$ 2 million upon completion.

¹¹⁸ On missed deadlines see Fenton 27 July 2003; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Baron 7 Dec. 2003. For the 1998 deadline see Baron 2001; also Delgado 8 July 1996; Silva 25 Mar. 2000; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003. In a detailed timeline of official decisions, Wilson (5 Nov. 2003) and Flynn (10 Nov. 2003) meticulously trace the extensions between 1998 and 2003 as well as the time frames set in an amended contract declaring the ultimate completion date to be March 31, 2006; cf. also “El Paso City Council” 6 Nov. 2003. For further reports on the progress of the project see Thompson 17 Jan. 2002; Flakus 9 Feb. 2002; Wadsworth 31 Mar. 2002.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006. While the contract stipulated a minimum size of “one-and-a-half times life size” there was no upper limit on the sculpture’s size. Consequently, Houser reached for the world record; cf. Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006.

¹²⁰ Cf. “Canceling Oñate Statue” 14 Dec. 2001.

given the *XII Travelers* project in its early phase. Canceling the commitment to the Oñate project would have offered the city an elegant escape from unpleasant negotiations with an obstinate artist, as well as from the confrontation with an increasingly controversial topic.

The political implications of Oñate commemoration reached El Paso in 2002, threatening to divide both city council and community. With a glance toward the controversy in Albuquerque and Alcalde, where “the whole Spanish conquistador/Indian story has a little sharper edge to it” (Jon Amastae qtd. in San Martin 20 Feb. 2000), tribal Governor Arturo Senclair (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo) declared that “the time for debate on the relative merits of the project has long passed” (Paredes 5 Nov. 2003, Wilson 5 Nov. 2003). On the one hand, individual council members sought dialogue with Acoma Pueblo, asking for a “statement of forgiveness” (Larry Medina) in order to avoid the tension and embarrassment that jarred communication between the different camps at the other sites (McKenna 04 Jan. 2002). On the other hand, project proponents discounted ‘dissenting’ opinion as “political correctness run amok” when critics called for sensitivity to the complexities of historical experience as well as to the symbolic significance of representing history and to the mechanisms of exclusion and suppression that informed the history making in *The XII Travelers*.¹²¹ In 2002, reflection on the forms of Oñate commemoration in El Paso seemed to suggest abandoning the Oñate sculpture. At the same time, it was a moment of retrospection for critics and proponents who took account of the progress of the project in highly revelatory formats that reflected the ideological split characteristic for the commemoration of the conquistador: While critical assessment of the impact of Oñate and Spanish colonization on the El Paso region took place in a free workshop and conference organized at UTEP that addressed both general and academic public, proponents gathered at a private fundraising dinner organized by local historian and Mission Trail Association director Sheldon Hall which featured a dinner lecture by retired UNM colonial Spanish historian John Kessell.¹²² The competing formats are expressive of the different commemorative approaches embraced by proponents and critics: While critics preferred an academic workshop style that allowed expert and lay opinions to contribute equally to the debate, the restricted admission (US \$ 35/person) and the lecture in the other event spoke to the monologic, authoritative lecturing approach to the past that also informs Houser’s vision. The respective titles further contrast the diametrically opposed

¹²¹ Cf. Chapman 16 Nov. 2003. The notion of political correctness that lets the controversy appear as a manifestation of the culture wars also informs the commentary and reports on the debate by Flakus 9 Feb. 2002; Edgren 8 Nov. 2003; Flynn 10 Nov. 2003; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004.

¹²² The one-day conference was entitled “Don Juan de Oñate, the Man, Myth, and Mestizaje”; cf. “Workshop” 21 Apr. 2002; Wadsworth 31 Mar. 2002. The more exclusive event at the Airport Hilton Inn presented “Don Juan de Oñate: The Legacy and Controversy” in a lecture by John Kessel.

approaches to the past, pitting an emphasis on the constructedness of the historical record against a reverential duty to honor the past.

Apparently as a side result of the phase of stock taking, the city council tried to recontextualize the runaway Oñate sculpture in the original plans for downtown revitalization in early 2003, honoring its commitment to culturally oriented projects. City officials designated Cleveland Square as a central launching area for redevelopment, making the Public Library an anchor for further educational facilities like the El Paso Museum of History.¹²³ Owing to the Oñate sculpture's origins in TIF-funded revitalization measures which tied location to funding issues, downtown remained the City Council's preferred location for the project, regardless of the dissolution of the TIF district in 1997.¹²⁴ For the *XII TVC*, a downtown location provided an economic justification that became more urgent when the project steered in dire financial straits. They reckoned that revenue could be gained by advertising *The XII Travelers* in the double function of tourist attraction and innovative element of urban planning (Metz 10 Nov. 2003).¹²⁵

However, owing to its superlative dimensions the Oñate sculpture could not be integrated into the remodeling of centrally located Cleveland Square as would limit future extension of the public library and history museum complexes and thus impair other redevelopment projects. Quickly, project proponents sought the benefits of the unexpected modification of plans, arguing that downtown architecture diminished the sculpture's aesthetic impact because it restricted the view.¹²⁶ Public debate of alternative locations that took regard of the landmark character of the prospective statue began with a series of Letters to the Editor roughly in 1998 (San Martin 20 Feb. 2000). Intrigued by the iconicity of the proposed Oñate sculpture, arguments of accessibility and visibility made placement beyond the bounds of downtown feasible. Suggestions included sites with a commemorative function such as San Elizario, allegedly the site of Oñate's First Thanksgiving, or La Hacienda where

¹²³ Together with the renovation of the Plaza Theater, the expansion of the Public Library and relocation of the El Paso Museum of History to Cleveland Square were measures that remained of the sixteen TIF projects; cf. Zanetell 4 Apr. 1991; also "Artist Gets" 13 Apr. 1994; "City Likely to OK" 6 Aug. 2001; "Library Project Works Around" 25 Oct. 2001; "Progress Made" 10 Apr. 2003; Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006.

¹²⁴ Merced 31 Oct. 1999; San Martin 20 Feb. 2000; "Traveler" 23 July 2003. For maintenance of the downtown location see also "Debut" 30 Sep. 1996; "City Likely to OK" 6 Aug. 2001; "Library Project" 25 Oct. 2001; Abram 2001; Tate Apr. 2002; "Progress Made" 10 Apr. 2003.

¹²⁵ To Houser, Cleveland Square as well as San Jacinto Plaza offered suitable locations for the sculptures in the context of a redeveloped downtown architecture, linking different TIF projects in "a sculptural theme park which would become an indelible El Paso trademark celebrating our history and cultural heritage"; cf. John Houser to TIF Board 6 May 1988. In trying to secure downtown placement, proponents had even suggested to remove Luis Jimenez's cherished alligator display from San Jacinto Plaza in favor of Houser's project, but the motion was soon abandoned owing to general protests; cf. Ramirez 5 Feb. 1999, Renteria 7 Mar. 1999.

¹²⁶ "Group Urges Moving" 22 July 2003; Fenton 27 July 2003; "Name Change" 4 Nov. 2003; Houser 28 Oct. 2004.

he forded the river (now the site of a private restaurant), and also pointed to the extant tourist infrastructure such as El Paso's Scenic Drive along the foot of the Franklin Mountains that would ensure visibility even for those passing through El Paso on the interstate ("Oñate Statue Location" 19 Sep. 1999; Merced 31 Oct. 1999).

Houser proceeded with the project although no final location had been determined. Despite the crises, the city retained its commitment to the project and funded both maquette (1997) and full-scale enlargement (2001) of the sculpture (Wilson 5 Nov. 2003). In fall 2002, the model was shipped in pieces from the artist's enlarging studio outside Mexico City to a foundry north of Santa Fe, including a brief stopover in El Paso.¹²⁷ However, the project reached an existential crisis in April 2003 when Houser and his team effectively ran out of operating money with only two thirds of the project completed.¹²⁸ At this 'moment of truth,' the city accepted an offer of support from El Paso International Airport Inc. to salvage the project financially and resolve all concomitant issues. Relocation to the airport resolved the matter of location and accessibility, in the words of Airport Aviation Director Pat Abeln "probably the one place where you can have it in a public setting where the greatest number of people will see it."¹²⁹ With the support of the new sponsor and in order to prevent loss of previous investment, the city made a last commitment of US \$ 713,000 towards completion of the sculpture, presenting the artist with an amended contract that required "the statue to be finished by March 2006, nearly eight years after its initial deadline of April 25, 1998."¹³⁰ Eventually, in fall 2005 the cast pieces of the sculpture were on display in Santa Fe and at the foundry in Tesuque as planned (Martinez 4 Sept 2005). Next, the fragments were shipped to a foundry in Wyoming for assembly and welding before they traveled to El Paso, awaiting

¹²⁷ "New Mexico Foundry" 26 Sep. 2002; "Oñate Head" 12-19 Oct. 2002; Valdez 11 Oct. 2002. The resin cast molds had been on display at Sunland Park Mall in El Paso in late 2001; cf. "A Peek at Oñate" 29 Dec. 2001; "Section of Oñate's Statue" 23-29 Dec. 2001.

¹²⁸ Kolenc (10 Apr. 2003) first reported that *The XII Travelers* were unable to finance the remainder of US \$ 300,000 out of US \$ 1.6 million; cf. also "Group Urges Moving" 22 July 2003; Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; "Council Renames Statue" 5 Nov. 2003; "El Paso City Council" 6 Nov. 2003.

¹²⁹ "Name Change" 4 Nov. 2003. Relocation was already considered in "Group Urges Moving" 22 July 2003; Fenton 27 July 2003. Fenton (27 July 2003) and Metz (4 Aug. 2003) welcomed the relocation to the airport as a pragmatic response to the crisis of April 2003, commending the airport for the viewing space, security and audience appeal it offered along with the financial support and the resolution to complete the project. For the name change and relocation see also Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004. Houser & Schwartz (28 Oct. 2004) released the new deadline, renaming and relocation matter-of-factly in one of their progress reports.

¹³⁰ Qtd. in Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; cf. also "El Paso City Council" 6 Nov. 2003. The stated amount is confirmed by Wilson 5 Nov. 2003; Flynn 10 Nov. 2003; Paredes 5 Nov. 2003; "Council Renames Statue" 5 Nov. 2003; "El Paso City Council" 6 Nov. 2003.

installation and dedication at the airport in fall 2006 and April 2007, respectively.¹³¹ *The Equestrian* was dedicated on April 20, 2007, accompanied by vocal protest.

Concurrent with the changes in spatial imagery that the original proposal had undergone, the debate about locating the Oñate project also displayed a perceptible shift toward an infrastructure suggesting mobility rather than stability and permanence. Despite all its appeals to site-specificity, *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* contributes a subtext of generalization, placelessness and instability to the commemoration of Oñate along the Rio Grande that can also be found in the representations of the conquistador at Alcalde and Albuquerque. The spatial decontextualization of the project was paralleled in a movement that tended to detach the individual figure from the temporal context of a historical series and thus underlined the hero worship that Houser allegedly wanted to avoid. Even if Oñate proponents rhetorically tried to establish continuity with the past in presenting the sculpture as an expression of the ‘historic contributions’ of a group, the strategies of emplacement single out the statue as an individual pioneer of heroic achievement. They imply notions of individualism and exceptionalism that defy all appeals to a collective and betray an indebtedness to tropes of the master narrative of United States history.

II.3.2 2003: THE EQUESTRIAN – IN ORDER TO TELL THE FULL STORY?

At a turbulent council meeting of November 4, 2003, activists from all camps sealed the Oñate project’s destiny: Reinterpreting the contentious narrative of Oñate’s conquest as a story “symbolizing the introduction of the horse to the area and its legacy,” the City Council voted to rename the statue *The Equestrian*.¹³² The meeting represented a significant revisiting of the Oñate debate that restated many of the issues that had been brought to public forums earlier and elsewhere. As in Alcalde and in Albuquerque, there were calls for a greater awareness of the need for “giving both sides of the story” (Callejo in Flynn 10 Nov. 2003) in order to balance the biases of representation and to highlight the constructedness of the historical record. Yet attempts at commemorating Oñate by telling ‘the whole story’ led to mutual accusations of closed-mindedness on the part of supporters and critics of the project: “Ironically, proponents of the Oñate statue have charged that critics of the statue don’t want to hear the whole story and that they want to deny history. Yet, community members have protested the Oñate statue for almost a decade because they want the full story to be told” (Leyva and Shepherd 27 Jan. 2004). Historians like Simmons, Kessell and Metz who accused

¹³¹ Martinez was optimistic that the equestrian would see completion in late summer or early fall; cf. Martinez 17 Mar. 2006; Martinez 30 Apr. 2006. A last caveat was uttered by Dan Huff (26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006).

¹³² “Name Change” 4 Nov. 2003. Cf. also Paredes 5 Nov. 2003; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004; Martinez 4 Sep. 2005.

their opponents of instrumentalizing and thus distorting historical evidence in the service of contemporary political ends were themselves busy questioning that record where it tainted the conquistador's glory.¹³³ Oñate critics, on the other hand, referred to this as 'whitewashing' the historical record, harshly contending that the proponents' "self-gratifying, self-indulgent illusion of grandeur" ignored the true needs of the community (Paredes 5 Nov. 2003) and attested to Mayor Wardy's fears that "The Oñate statue will hurt our reputation [...] as a 'colorblind' community" (Wilson 5 Nov. 2003). Although it was unlikely that Houser would realize a conciliatory vision in his Oñate sculpture, the city council nevertheless honored its eleven-year commitment to the (sub-)project, possibly hoping that the remainder of the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* might be more conducive to the multicultural, transnational sense of place that characterizes El Paso. Such hopes may have been based on conciliatory voices that promised community support despite the aggressive confrontation, given that the commemoration accounted for the multicultural past in El Paso:

El Pasoans want a connection with the past. We applaud this sensibility and agree that El Paso has a rich heritage. Indigenous people, Mexican businesswomen, Chinese laborers, African-American teachers and many other diverse groups of people inhabit El Paso's history. It is about time that we listen to their voices and represent their stories. (Leyva and Shepherd 27 Jan. 2004)

Councilor Larry Medina also endorsed reconciliation through a historic theme and envisioned a more inclusive, even transnational function for the representatives of the urban community of El Paso when he declared that "[a]s elected officials, we are here to be sensitive to all of our peoples and our neighbors to the south as well as our neighbors to the north" (Flakus 9 Feb. 2002). Yet critics like Richard Baron deplored the shift in the focus of discussion from aesthetic concerns and other issues of public art to a historic theme as a change to the worse (Baron 7 Dec. 2003). In Baron's opinion, trying to discuss historic characters and specifically Oñate's personality only resulted in an unproductive and incessant juggling of similar arguments on both sides of the controversy. Comparison with the debates about the projects in Alcalde and Albuquerque confirms his conclusion.

¹³³ Despite Villagrà's *Historia* and the voluminous accounts accompanying the *residencia* of 1614 that indicted Oñate on charges of disrespecting the *Nuevas Leyes de Las Indias*, both Simmons and Kessell have lectured on the (non-)evidence of contemporaneous accounts of Oñate's punitive measure, questioned the existence of drastic corporeal punishment and slavery and challenged the equation of Spanish conquest and brutality. Even if they conceded cruelty, they relativized it by reference to the "spirit and context of the times." During the meeting of November 2003, local historian Leon Metz retorted to a critical account of the Battle of Acoma by discounting the colonial atrocities committed by Oñate, disguising denial in an audacious reinterpretation: "[I]n a moment that left those in attendance dumbfounded, Metz speculated out loud as to why there was not any historical record of Oñate killing people, adding, 'if he is cutting off feet he is trying to avoid killing people'"; Paredes 5 Nov. 2003.

The concerns expressed in the controversy about *The XII Travelers* and especially the Oñate/Equestrian project are congruent with the controversies about commemoration at the other two sites of memory. They revolve around the contentious matter of representing history (or ideas thereof) through particular characters from the records of the past, popularly referred to as heritage. They point to the symbolic power entailed in the processes of representation and commemoration, as well as to the consequences for the social context within which such processes take place. Representing history is thus suspended between the available material evidence and the symbolic significance attributed to and derived from that evidence. Not surprisingly, revisionist impulses to address contemporary inequities originating in a hierarchically stratified multicultural past with a greater sensitivity for the ambiguities of ‘heritage’ were fiercely fought by traditionalists who perceived themselves as objective observers and keepers of the past and who not only feared the irreverence of toppling long-standing (or newly erected) icons of social consensus, but the loss of ascribed and assumed authority originating in a structured hierarchy of knowledge and power based on the exclusion of the Other and on difference.

The conclusion to the overall story of Oñate commemoration along the Rio Grande offered by *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* must appear all the more evasive and unsatisfactory. Renaming the Oñate sculpture *The Equestrian* marks a return to Tom Lea’s concept in the *Calendar* that removes the figure of Oñate from the cultural interactions he triggered to an abstract plane disconnected from the multicultural present. Renaming also circumvents the contentious matter of Oñate commemoration in favor of another ostensibly neutral ‘contribution’ to the present Southwest: it erases memories of conquest and rewrites Oñate’s arrival as the introduction of the horse to the Southwest, foregrounding the horse as another icon of a picturesque, apparently innocent and uncontentious ‘Western’ past. In El Paso, memory, rather than the constantly invoked ‘past,’ is instrumentalized primarily to successfully market urban space. The *XII Travelers* project thus becomes exemplary for a trend towards the commodification of times and spaces commonly associated with the frontier heritage as it affirms canonized images contained in (and by) the established storehouse of collective memory. As a site of memory, *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* turned monologic also in the sense that commercial and planning interest had dominated the development of the project to a degree that undermined efforts at reinterpreting the past from the perspective of marginalized groups within the urban community. The professed inclusivity and the recognition of the Hispanic past – potential counter-narratives to the established tale and collective memory of the nation – appeared only as secondary motivations intended as selling points for the project.

III SIZES OF MEMORY: THE ART AND POLITICS OF JOHN HOUSER

O Pass to the North - Now the Old Giants Are Gone - We Little Men Live
Where Heroes Once Walked the Inviolable Earth.

(Inscription for Lea's Courthouse Mural "Pass of the North," 1938)

The idea for a sculptural rendition of El Paso's past dates to the first quarter of the twentieth century. First brought up in 1915, it never fully faded from leading El Pasoans' dreams of improving the image of their city (Farley-Villalobos 12 Nov. 1988; Piña 1990; Abram 2001). In 1988, John Houser's proposal for *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* resurrected the plan to reinvigorate downtown business and street life with public art works. His proposal refers back to a Section of Fine Arts mural commission for the El Paso Federal Courthouse that the regionalist painter Tom Lea III had won in 1938 (Fig. 3) and which evidently also served as a blueprint for a collection of historical vignettes executed by Lea, entitled *Calendar of Twelve Travelers Through the Pass of the North*.¹³⁴ The *Calendar* achieved iconicity locally as evident in several reprints as well as in its decorative uses as menu covers or newspaper illustrations (Fig. 4).¹³⁵ Lea's work centrally influenced the artistic and historical perspectives that inform Houser's art and his project for El Paso, paramount among them a traditional realist style and the thematic link to frontier history as well as a modernist understanding of the role of art and of being an artist.¹³⁶ The chapter investigates Houser's artistic formation and aesthetic; it contextualizes the tropes and topoi in the genealogy of his

¹³⁴ Lea (1907-2001), who worked as a muralist during the Depression and an artist war correspondent from the Pacific for *LIFE* magazine during WWII, is known for his post-war work as a critically acclaimed illustrator and popular writer of historical fiction. His novels *The Brave Bulls* (1949) and *The Wonderful Country* (1952) were turned into movies in 1951 and 1959. *The King Ranch* (1957) and *The Hands of Cantú* (1964) deal with the history of Texas and the Southwest. Lea appears inspired by Maynard Dixon especially in his landscape paintings. Southwestern motifs as well as a traditional realist style characterize his work. His artistic creed with regard to the role of public art is expressed in the programmatic statement about the courthouse mural "Pass of the North": "I hold two hopes for this work just completed. One, that it may bring to life in a few minds that vivid history of the Pass to the North. And the other, that the point of view I have taken as a creative artist may help to demonstrate that the function of a mural in a community is to deepen and to enrich a people's perception of *its own tradition* and the character of *its own land*"; "Lea Steps Down" (emphases mine). Cf. also Ligon 12 Oct. 1984; Schwartz. For a concise summary of his work see *Light From the Sky* (with comprehensive, partly annotated bibliography). For further assessment of Lea's work see Herjter 2003; Craver and Margo 1995; West 1967.

¹³⁵ First published in a limited folio edition by El Paso publisher Carl Hertzog in 1946, Lea's *Calendar* was reprinted in 1947 and again in 1981 (by El Paso Electric Co.) for the city's Four Centuries celebration; cf. Crowder 1 Mar. 1988. For the number of limited folio editions (365) and the decorative function see the letter by Bryson (28 May 1991). Leon Metz used the vignettes for a monthly chronicle in the *El Paso Citizen* to enlist citizens' support for Houser's project; cf. e.g. Sep. 1996.

¹³⁶ The indebtedness of the project to Tom Lea's publication is recognized in reports by Martin 23 May 1995; Houser 1996: 6; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002; Metz 4 Aug. 2003; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004.

work for El Paso. His artistic training and formative experience as a sculptor inextricably link the project to the kind of epic perspective on the past that deals in monuments and heroes rather than memorials and historic processes (cf. Danto 1985), as the discussion of his art, style and politics will demonstrate. The development of Houser's *XII Travelers* project coincides with a paradigm shift in the approaches to public art and memory, from illustrative forms of monuments suggesting individual and social improvement through the emulation of role models to engaging, participatory expressions of commemoration emphasizing the nexus of space, time, and identity in contemporary society. Yet by resorting to Lea's *Calendar*, Houser established an artistic lineage for the *XII Travelers* project that ties the project back to works that entail the danger of reducing historical representation to a mere illustration of a vaguely conceived past and that celebrate the spirit of westward expansion, Manifest Destiny and ultimately conquest of both the land and its original inhabitants. Not surprisingly, his interpretation of the Southwestern past roused concern and protest, requesting thematic and spatial reinterpretations.

III.1 TWELVE/XII TRAVELERS

In theme and in spirit, a Turnerian perspective on Western history pervades Lea's *Calendar*, Houser's model: it celebrates the perseverance of pioneering individuals, all male, who endured in the Western wilderness, tamed 'the savage' and 'his' land, and advanced the frontier in the established Turnerian sense. The pioneering spirit emanates from the language used in the *Calendar*'s opening lines as well as in the travelers' individual characterizations that establish a claim to place and region through intrepid, energetic leaders "at once enterprising, courageous and intelligent" (Lea 1947). The historic figures appear in a chronological procession and personify the different "chapters in the history of the West" (Lea 1947). Lea thus established a genealogy of allegorical figures that embody collective achievement and anchor it at the "doorway to the North" (Lea 1947). Every image in the *Calendar* is headed by a descriptive epithet that precedes the date and the name of each figure and foregrounds achievement rather than personality.¹³⁷ Lea's narrative smoothly transits from pre-European times to Anglo American civilization, emplotting and also naturalizing local history as a tale of continuous "efforts to master space" (Upton 1988: 703). He also

¹³⁷ Formatted as accomplishment, year, and name, the list comprises (in chronological order) 'The Wanderer' (de Vaca), 'The Missionary' (Rodriguez), 'The Explorer' (Espejo), 'The Visionary' (de Sosa), 'Conquistador' (Oñate), 'The Builder' (Garcia), 'The Warrior' (de Vargas), 'The Precursor' (Pike), 'The Settler' (Ponce de Leon), 'The Trader' (Magoffin), 'The Soldier' (Doniphan), and 'Frontiersman' (Wallace). The exact differences between a warrior and a soldier or an explorer and a precursor might be debatable, yet it is probably no over-interpretation to claim that Lea arranged his characters according to a trajectory that posits progressive degrees of civilization.

utilizes images of the Rio Grande and of trails originating in time immemorial as both actual lifelines for survival and as symbols guiding the transformation of the region from ancient times to its proper place in modernity:

From earliest time the valley of the Rio Grande has been a natural pathway for men traversing the Southwest. It was an *ancient* trail before Europeans set foot on the Western World; [...] For almost four centuries history has been made by the procession of strong men who have filed through that pass. [...] Various not only in character but in accomplishment, these early travelers through the Pass each unfold a picturesque legend of the land. Their portraits might each be considered as characteristic symbols of early chapters in the history of the West, episodes in the conquest of that Pass of the North *where a modern city now stands*. (Lea 1947; emphases mine)

Significantly, the last characters to appear in the *Calendar* are “The Soldier – 1846 – Alexander Doniphan” and “Frontiersman – 1850 – Big Foot Wallace,” closing Lea’s frontier narrative with the military and economic takeover of formerly Mexican territory in the mid-nineteenth century. The intense symbolism of Lea’s *Calendar* suggests that even the absence of the definite article on the Oñate and Wallace pages can be interpreted as caesuras in the history of the West: The latter two figures are made emblematic not just for the closing of eras of which legends were made, but for two qualitatively, nationally and ethnically different processes of opening up ‘the West’ – Spanish Conquest and Anglo Frontier. In imitating Lea’s use of historic allegory as well as in renaming the Oñate sculpture ‘The Equestrian,’ Houser reveals his indebtedness to the historic vision that informs Lea’s *Calendar*: the reference to Lea’s work conjures the spirit of Manifest Destiny, a problematic renaissance of old frontier values in twenty-first-century U.S. society. With the exception of Chicano scholar Dennis Bixler Marquez who called for alternative ways of publicly acknowledging Hispanic history and identity, few critics commented on the degree to which Houser’s project is informed by a heroic perspective on the Western past.¹³⁸ Rather, they took up his apparent indifference toward the social sensitivities entailed by a multicultural setting, when they accused Houser of expressing a “white man’s view” of history (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002).¹³⁹ When project proponents rushed to Houser’s defense, their charge of ‘political correctness’ resurrected a pre-civil rights rhetoric and revived obsolete attitudes about the composition of American society. It certainly has complicated the debate about the establishment of the Oñate monuments and made the search for alternative forms of commemorating the past close

¹³⁸ Marquez criticized the monument as “representing a historical individual on a scale that *automatically confers heroic status*”; Thompson 9 Sep. 2001, emphasis mine.

¹³⁹ The UTEP student newspaper published a report on a coalition of different Chicano groups who opposed the *XII Travelers* project, among other things because “[t]he artist is giving us a historical vision from the eyes of the colonializers”; Romo 27 Sep. 1990.

to impossible. Nevertheless, the issue of perspective represents one of the ongoing points of contention in the controversy over Houser's proposal.¹⁴⁰

That the popular appeal of old Western lore still exists well beyond the local and regional imagination was illustrated in the appreciation extended to Lea's work and personality by the President George W. Bush in his acceptance speech:

My friend, the artist Tom Lea of El Paso, captured the way I feel about our great land. He and his wife, he said, "live on the east side of the mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming ... not the side to see the day that is gone." Americans live on the sunrise side of mountain. The night is passing. And we are ready for the day to come ("Bush Closes Acceptance Speech" 3 Aug. 2000).

Bush's quote turns Lea's statement – that is also engraved on his epitaph – into a motto capturing the unflinching optimism said to characterize American society. As in 1915, both in 1988 and in 2000 the historic theme invoked the optimism and suggestive power of westward expansion, regardless of decades of careful revision of the many Western pasts. Lea's pictorial narrative ended in the antebellum period and rooted the immediate post-World War II present in the secure grounds of an agrarian ideal, before the uprooting effects of urbanization, industrialization, immigration and imperial outreach during the second half of the nineteenth century had made themselves felt in U.S. American society. In emulating Lea's approach to the past, Houser adopted an almost Rankean stance of 'telling it like it was,' untouched by academic discussion about the issue of objectivity in historiography: "We're not out to memorialize great people. We're out to describe the history of the area with all the conflict and drama. We don't want to revise history; just present it as it was, as accurately as we can."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ In early 1990, the recommendations of a mayoral review committee had prompted a reproach of 'racism' from supporters of the *XII Travelers* project. Yet what may have been intended as a moralistic stopper to a fruitless debate about Oñate's (de)merits turned into an explosive trigger of a debate about perspectives on and values imparted by the past that was still going on in 2007. Further concerns as to the value system embodied in the *XII Travelers* project were raised in a statement to the TIF Board; cf. Juárez 17 Jan. 1991.

¹⁴¹ Qtd. in Romo 27 Nov. 1990. Initially, even gallerist Adair Margo defended the project's concern with 'historical accuracy' in a letter to Walli Haley of 23 Aug. 1990: "The concern is solely to portray history accurately." Other commentators also emphasized the stated intent of the project to tell history rather than extend moral judgment on actors and actions; cf. Jauregi Nov. 1992. In the first years of the controversy, opposing positions in the debate were tendentiously simplified, pitting the "politically correct" against the "historically accurate"; cf. Houser 1996: 7; cf. also McGirk 29 June 2001. Over the years, however, project supporters modified the notion of historical accuracy to the degree that in 2001 Houser rephrased it as 'historical significance': "In the concept of the memorial we are not picking heroes out of our history. We are commemorating the history itself, and history is not always made by heroes. We are picking these people for their historical significance and not necessarily for their moral character"; qtd. in Abram 2001. Monument supporters are now trying to evade the need to explain the choices made in selecting characters and the form of representation with reference to a need for "history for the sake of history [and more recently, art for the sake of art]"; cf. Martínez 2003.

III.2.1 AN ARTIST'S FORMATION: JOHN HOUSER'S FIGURAL WESTERN NEO-REALISM

Given the fact that Houser was initiated into the National Sculpture Society only in 2004, the label “renowned” that self-promoting texts attached to Houser’s name and work was clearly an exaggeration in 1988. Previous to his El Paso engagement, commissioned work by Houser had been rejected or only reluctantly accepted by public institutions like the University of Arizona and, as one art critic put it, Houser entered the El Paso art scene “pretty low on the totem pole.”¹⁴² This would change with the El Paso project, although the artistic achievement of the *XII Travelers* and especially the Oñate sculpture is compromised by the art historical context that Houser constructed around the project. When John Sherrill Houser submitted his proposal to the City of El Paso in 1988, his artistic accomplishment and style could be circumscribed as that of a “competent traditional artist” (Ligon 27 Sep. 1990), or, in Baron’s somewhat ironic phrasing, of “probably one of the best traditional western artists in El Paso” (Oct. 1990). The Florentine realist and society portraitist Pietro Annigoni (Thompson 9 Sep. 2001) as well as realist sculptor Avard Fairbanks had substantially informed Houser’s artistry, in addition to a figurative realistic influence in sculpture indebted to the Boston School of Realism of R. H. Ives Gammel (Fig. 6), itself reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Beaux-Arts tradition in sculpture.¹⁴³ Both in style and in spirit, Houser’s approach evokes what Boime calls the “magisterial gaze” characteristic for much of nineteenth-century landscape painting and deeply engrained in the national consciousness (1991: 144). Certainly the neo-realist tradition facilitated Houser’s congenial reception of Lea’s work in style and outlook and explain Houser’s affinity for the individual and his insistence on representing the moral exemplary that characterize his design of *The XII Travelers*.

Boime points out that as the twentieth century progressed, figural realism congealed into “a kind of representation that resembled popular illustration” and which “magnifies what is typically ornamental” (1991: 150). The tendency is most evident in Houser’s choice of

¹⁴² Ligon 27 Sep. 1990; Baron Oct. 1990. Acceptance to the association dedicated to figural and realistic sculpting was announced locally in “John Houser Elected” 3-9 Oct. 2004. Further biographical background is offered on the *XII Travelers* web site, <http://www.12travelers.org/>.

¹⁴³ Cf. Piña 1990: 7; <http://www.dr-ricardo-sanchez.com/houser.html>. While Annigoni (1910-1988) is most famous for his portrait of Queen Elizabeth II (1954), Fairbanks (1897-1987) has earned fame with his sculptures for the Capitol’s Statuary Hall and further large-scale public art projects; cf. Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006. Both artists’ works are devoted to realist representation and unaffected by abstract modernism. They can be related to a school of neo-realism; their artistic sensibilities originate in nineteenth-century Beaux Arts and their craftsmanship is owed to the Old Masters. Especially Fairbanks strove to communicate social principle in his art by representing the virtuous individual. John Houser studied with Annigoni in Italy in the 1960s and later assisted Fairbanks in public art projects. Houser also claims for himself a sensitivity to multicultural issues owing to his work among minorities in Europe, Latin America and the United States. Notwithstanding the experience, it does not appear to have translated to his historical vision.

Lea's *Calendar* for the theme of *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest*. Artist colleagues with expertise in public art commissions like Luis Jimenez took issue with Houser's stylistic anachronism, and critically remarked upon his obsessive attention to detail which, while allegedly in the service of 'authenticity,' further supported the obsolete equation of "heroes on horses" and public art. Critics disapproved of a public art project that assembled "19th century-style statues" (Baron 6 Dec. 1992) as representative of a genre deficient of expressive strength and "transformative or contemplative" character and altogether unsuccessful as "an articulation of the human spirit."¹⁴⁴ Instead, for Houser's El Paso colleagues public art was to search and realize site-specific and community-oriented forms of artistic expression, involving various media and models of public participation. The claim that "there is little public art, except for a cross that looks down on the city from a peak of the Franklin Mountains" (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002) reveals a remarkable blindness to the presence of public art in El Paso on the part of Houser and his supporters.¹⁴⁵ The oversight appears programmatic considering that El Paso has developed a very significant tradition of muralists and that it was also home to Luis Jiménez, the late innovator of public Chicana/o art and sculpture with his irreverent take on cultural myths.¹⁴⁶ It reveals a rift between public art forms with an explicit political or aesthetic agenda – like the murals with their link to the Chicano movement or like Jiménez's innovative fiberglass sculptures – and public art forms that privilege renditions of historic and everyday themes in a rather descriptive realist style cultivated through the National Sculpture Society.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Houser strove for an 'authentic' representation by seeking out an Oñate descendant for a portrait of the conquistador, by researching period armor and accessories of horse and rider and by anatomical study of rearing horses; cf. Delgado 8 July 1996; McGirk 29 June 2001; Abram 2001; Thompson 9 Sep. 2001. However, for Baron (7 Dec. 2003) Houser's representation of Oñate amounted to nothing more than "a visibly recognizable representation in bronze of a man with a pointy beard dressed in conquistador garb, perched upon a rearing horse with engorged testicles." In 1989, Jimenez had criticized the overall project as "naïve and amateurish."

¹⁴⁵ Cf. also Houser qtd. in Delgado 8 July 1996; Zanetell 18 Apr. 1991. They also mention "a fiberglass sculpture of alligators [by Luis Jimenez] was commissioned for San Jacinto Plaza after the city removed a decades-old live exhibit"; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

¹⁴⁶ For Jimenez's significance see Whitney 1997; Storey 14 June 2006; Borunda 14 June 2006; Belcher 15 June 2006. For the mural tradition see "Debut" 30 Sep. 1996; Schwartz.

¹⁴⁷ Exemplary for such commissions, the works of e.g. Glenna Goodacre or Frederick Hart still dominate American urban space, accompanying the commemoration of national experience and trauma on the National Mall as well as decorating urban intersections or sidewalks.

III.2.2 AN ARTIST'S VISION: JOHN HOUSER'S MONUMENTALISM AND 'ICONICITY'

In addition to his neo-realist training and the thematic revival of Tom Lea's *Calendar*, Houser brought an artistic lineage to the *XII Travelers* project that links himself and his work to the monumental tradition of Gutzon Borglum's Mount Rushmore: Born in South Dakota to Borglum's First Assistant Sculptor Ivan Houser, the artist spent his early childhood years literally at the foot of the gargantuan carving of the presidential heads. Given the close biographical link to the popular national icon in the Black Hills of South Dakota it was easy for reports to explain Houser's colossal aspirations for the project, not only in terms of actual size but also with regard to the national significance he attributed to the *XII Travelers* for El Paso.¹⁴⁸

Boime reads Mount Rushmore as a "metaphorical embodiment of the aspirations of Manifest Destiny" (1991: 144). Borglum selected the individual presidential figures of his monument for their contribution to expansion across the continent, thus "telling the story of the conquering white men and their accomplishments" to the nation as a colossal epic "attesting to the spirit of conquest" (Boime 1991: 162; cf. also passim 142, 144, 155). He presents the allegory in a rhetoric of preserving and perpetuating "the *ideals* of liberty and freedom on which our government was established and to *record* the territorial expansion of the Republic" (Borglum's wife Mary qtd. in Boime 1991: 150, emphases mine). Houser's representation of the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* frames the past of the Southwestern borderlands past in a similar spirit: his collection of historical sculptures is designed as a unique "historically integrated" evocation of individual contributions to local and national history. In the representation of an "overpowering drama of discovery, struggle, pathos, defeat, and success" in the border area of El Paso (Houser 1988: 1-2), references to conquest abound. It follows the plot of expansion and progress, selecting protagonists of heroic dimension. Houser reserved the role of protagonist in the monumental drama of the past for the 'hero,' to him the paradigmatic role model. In the 1989 proposal, Houser justified selection for his "heroic figure groupings" based on epic accomplishment and outstanding "qualities of courage, ingenuity, stamina, and sensitivity" (4). Accordingly, the most significant change in perspective between the initial proposals and recent programmatic statements occurs with regard to the notion of 'heroes.' While Houser can be credited with

¹⁴⁸ As *The XII Travelers* developed into the record-breaking colossal commemoration of Oñate, the "Mount Rushmore connection" gained heightened prominence in reports on the project; cf. Farley-Villalobos 12 Nov. 1988; Jauregi Nov. 1992; McGirk 29 June 2001; Abram 2001; Thompson 9 Sep. 2001; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002; Blumenthal 10 Jan. 2004; Houser "Creating"; Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006; <http://www.12travelers.org/TheSculptors/JohnSherrillHouser/tabid/126/Default.aspx>; <http://www.dr-ricardo-sanchez.com/houser.html>.

avoiding overt references to established ‘national icons’ in the programmatic statements circulated on the Internet, and while the name change of 2003 signals awareness of the contentious character of Oñate commemoration, the entire concept for *The XII Travelers* revolves around individual actors and singular events. Both the development of *The XII Travelers* and the aesthetics of the Oñate sculpture disprove Houser’s claim that “[t]he heroism of the individual act [...] always deserves recognition but the romantic concept of the hero as an ‘ideal’ individual is dead” (Houser 2003).¹⁴⁹ He denied that his art was answering a call for ‘heroes,’ but the project is not designed to reflect on or critically appreciate the past for purposes of “building a better future” (Houser 2003).¹⁵⁰ While Houser effectively argued for democraticizing history, claiming that “heritage should not be concealed or blindsided by a single interpretation,” the strategies he used and the course that the Oñate sculpture took rather speak to an authoritarian attitude guiding both the design and the ideological program of the sculpture. Houser expected that *The XII Travelers* would become “an icon for El Paso and the Southwest” (1996: 7) – El Paso’s “own Mount Rushmore” (Sanchez 14 Jan. 1991) – and that the Oñate statue would constitute “a Southwestern equal to the Statue of Liberty” (Chapman 16 Nov. 2003).¹⁵¹ The notion of a “national icon” resonated most with those who envisioned a touristic use for the project, yet it was also emphatically embraced by monument supporters who emphasized the potential of public art to express El Paso’s distinctiveness and to give the city a “focal point for the future.”¹⁵² However, the shift in images had programmatic significance beyond the recognition effect and the numbers of potential visitors: Interpretations that imagined the Oñate monument “towering over the border between the United States and Mexico with the power of the Statue of Liberty” (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002) conferred additional meaning to the sculpture project given the border context of

¹⁴⁹ Houser’s paradoxical agenda is summarized in programmatic statements on the project website and in a statement posted on a website for the NM HCPL. Although he acknowledges the ambiguity of monumental art and claims to replace the longing for ‘heroes’ with a recognition of the ambivalent subject, this does not move him to take a different artistic course. He rather stays true to established notions of individualism and pluralism, juxtaposing in *The XII Travelers* commemoration and glorification, historical veracity and heroism, significance and empathy; cf. Houser 2003; Houser “Heroes in History?”

¹⁵⁰ Houser hoped that “a fuller and more accurate understanding of our complex past” might be achieved through an Oñate monument that “represents the multifaceted history of an era, which deserves to be recognized as a whole, criticized, analyzed and appreciated”; cf. Houser 2003; Houser “Heroes in History?”

¹⁵¹ In the early phase of the project (1988-1992), reference to Mount Rushmore suggested tourist appeal; cf. Apostolides 19 Oct. 1989; Olvera 18 Mar. 1990. Between 1992 and 1998 it was also used to explain delays and controversies, citing the difficulties encountered by the artist while realizing the colossal enterprise; cf. Jauregi Nov. 1992; Abram 5 June 1994. After 1998, reference to the Statue of Liberty replaced references to Mount Rushmore; cf. Thompson 9 Sep. 2001; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002; Houser “Creating.”

¹⁵² Metz qtd. in Zanetell 28 Mar. 1991. Metz further argued that “Public art shows that a city cares about its people,” a notion widely confirmed in the public debate; cf. Sanchez 6 Aug. 1990 and 1 Apr. 1991; Herring 6 Dec. 1992; “Unique 12 Travelers” 27 Oct. 1995; Conway 5 May 1990; Gandara 29 July(?) 1990; Hoylen 2 Nov. 1990; Fryer 28 Feb. 1991.

El Paso. Using the iconicity of the Statue of Liberty, they depicted the city as a port of entry for immigration, albeit a kind of immigration different from the one welcomed in New York Harbor. In the present, the conquistador on his rearing stallion certainly might be seen as communicating a less welcoming salute to many travelers through El Paso.¹⁵³

The terms ‘icon’ and ‘symbol’ were widely, yet loosely used in the debate. Houser used the term ‘icon’ idiosyncratically to mean role model (cf. Houser 2003).¹⁵⁴ To him, representing the past could not rely on abstraction and generalization: Houser rejected ‘symbols’ as too unspecific to achieve a sense of history because “[p]eople could not identify with an abstract piece as an evocation of their past” (Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). Instead, he preferred to present “powerful images of *particular individuals* (rather than generic figures) [to] draw the spectator more effectively into the drama of the past and stimulate continued study” (Houser 2003, emphasis mine). In his rather didactic approach to iconicity, the exemplary individual contributes to the significance of the work of art. When challenged for the symbolic implications of figurative historic sculpture as “an affront to the Native American population” (Marquez qtd. in Thompson 9 Sep. 2001), Houser defended his vision of the individual historic subject and actor, arguing that “Monumental sculpture has its own aesthetic imperative.”¹⁵⁵ Despite his proposed holistic approach to the complexity and contradictions inherent in the multifaceted past of the Southwest, the centrality he ascribed to ‘the specific’ as opposed to ‘the general’ (Houser 2003) suggests that he understands ‘icon’ and ‘symbol’ as pitting the “historically accurate” (iconic) against the “politically correct” (symbolic).

III.2.3 AN ARTIST’S AESTHETIC: SIZE OF MEMORY

In the epigraph to his 1988 proposal, Houser cites Gutzon Borglum on the aesthetics of size. Borglum’s dictum that “[a] monument’s dimensions should be determined by the importance to civilization of the events memorialized” was to become a veritable mantra in the discussion about Houser’s Oñate sculpture and served Houser to place himself in a tradition of the monumental in urban public art that reached back to antiquity. He thus took up an established classicist tradition of encoding American cityscapes both architecturally and

¹⁵³ Commentators had also hinted at recent immigration issues in a border town like El Paso: “Zacatecas state sends more undocumented workers to America than does anywhere else in Mexico, so this bronze man mounted on his stallion will not be without allusions to modern life”; McGirk 29 June 2001.

¹⁵⁴ Houser’s use of the term ‘icon’ best corresponds to the basic definition offered by Marshall Fishwick as “external expressions of internal convictions” which turn attitudes and assumptions into objects expressive of the “deep mythological structure of reality, revealing basic needs” and functioning as “symbols and *mindmarks*” (Fishwick 1992: 232, emphasis mine).

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.12travelers.org/XIITravelers/Introduction/TomLeaLegacy/tabid/92/Default.aspx>.

metaphorically.¹⁵⁶ To him, landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge, St. Louis's Gateway Arch, or Mount Rushmore not only stood witness to "the power of art in denoting a sense of place" but had also become "monumental metaphors for the United States" (Houser 1988: 1). Accordingly, from the (unrealized) Cabeza de Vaca design to *The Equestrian*, the envisioned size of the sculptures first grew to so-called heroic proportions and then to the colossal in order to enhance their "aesthetic and dramatic impact" (Houser 13 Sep. 1989).¹⁵⁷ Houser sought to bring form and effect of his sculptural narrative into congruence and achieve originality through "seeking out the unusual" (Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). He declared that size was the aesthetic quality that best conveyed "the impact of Oñate's arrival in the region and the explorer's influence in the development of Hispanic culture" (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002). On a scale that was "commensurate with the monumental history of the region" (Houser 1996: 6), size alone would suggest the "powerful story" and the historic drama unfolding at the site of Oñate's crossing the Rio Grande (Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). In Houser's reasoning, "a well-modeled powerful horse, *on a gigantic scale*, will make people aware of the nation's rich Hispanic heritage and of the horse's *important contribution* to the American West" (Houser "Creating," emphases mine). Revealing traces of the sublime in his aesthetic, the monumental size of Houser's Oñate was to correspond to the magnitude of historic events, effecting "a sense of wonder" and inspiring awe in order to both leave an emotional impression on visitors and incite interest in the region's history: "The difference with this project [...] is that it honors history, not heroes. [...] We are hoping this monument will get people interested in history and encourage them to explore all sides" (Houser qtd. in Thompson 17 Jan. 2002). However, like his artistic role model at Mount Rushmore Houser was prone to confuse bigness with greatness (Boime). Critical reception of Houser's Oñate statue suggests that it, too, will impress "through impact of scale rather than through its aesthetic quality" (Boime 1991: 149) once it is installed.

Apparently oblivious to his own restructuring of Southwestern history, Houser expressed surprise at the controversy stirred by his "sculpture walk through downtown El Paso that would include *larger-than-life* statues of the region's first explorers" and that "would *enshrine* the *epic achievements* of some 500 years of travel on the old trade route between Mexico City and Santa Fe that was known as the Camino Real, or Royal Road" (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002, emphases mine). As in Lea's *Calendar*, a procession of 'great men'

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Houser 1988: 1; 1989: 1. Citing the impact on urbanism that Pheidias had for Athens, Bernini for Rome or Vigeland for Oslo, Houser constructed an Old World lineage for monumental American landmark architecture.

¹⁵⁷ In correspondence with the mayor, Houser suggested to increase the scale for the first sculpture groups from 120% life-size to what he terms "heroic" size (200%); John Houser to Mayor Azar 1 May 1990. In 1996, the Fray Garcia statue had assumed proportions that at 14 feet qualified it as "the tallest historical bronze figure in the state of Texas"; Houser 1996: 5; cf. also Houser 11 Mar. 1995.

whose significance is underscored by the size of their material re-presentation serves Houser to order time and to reveal the beauty of the “measured symmetry” of periodization:

They're chapter heads for a certain era in history [...] We've divided that whole history into 12 segments and we've chosen one figure to represent each segment. And that figure is not represented as a hero, it's represented as sort of an icon for that era. [...] So people are supposed to [...] see that the monument stands for a certain period in the history of the Pass of the North. (Houser qtd. in Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006)

Houser reconstructed the past based on a notion of “honoring history” and educating the community through allegorical figures embodying key principles and ideals in American history and society as if history was a superorganic process independent of actors and context.¹⁵⁸ In posing as the impartial observer and record keeper, Houser downplayed his active role in shaping the historical vision communicated through public sculpture. He considered his use of individual figures as ‘chapter headings’ (Houser 2003; Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006) as merely a descriptive strategy designed to complement the original proposal. However, in combining the monumentalist aesthetics he found in Borglum’s Rushmore with Lea’s cast of characters from El Paso history in the concept for *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest*, Houser had in fact rewritten local history as a tale that aspired to national significance and fashioned himself as ‘teacher of the nation.’ Houser intended for his new “American monument” the double function “to break records and uphold tradition” (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002). It takes a lot of determination or complete historiographic insensitivity to overlook the potentially offensive implications of such a rewriting of local history.

In the end, Houser’s aspirations were not only determined by the aesthetics of scale or the didactics of the past, but also by the practical and quite mundane motivation of visitor appeal, providing another link to the rationale behind Mount Rushmore: Houser conceded “that many people will go out of their way to see a work that is unusual whether it has good qualities or not. Artists throughout history have understood this and used it to their advantage. A work that is shocking in size or any other way undoubtedly becomes a magnet” (Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). Consequently, his ambitions led him to vie for popular approval in an artistic

¹⁵⁸ Houser argued that “[t]he figures will depict men and women who have left their imprint, for good or ill, on the Southwest” (Abram 2001) and that his cast of characters was informed by historical accuracy rather than judgment; Romo 27 Nov. 1990. The didactic approach to telling the past through ‘metaphoric’ sculptures echoes in the artist’s brother’s contention that the “travelers selected should also reflect the rough mosaic of characters, both good and bad, who made this region” and that the sculptures “serve as metaphors of the movements and events which shaped the Southwest” in order to “make people cognizant of their heritage”; Houser 1996: 7. For “historical accuracy” see also Houser 1996: 7; McGirk 29 June 2001. For the principle of creating symmetry through “historic metaphors for their respective periods across an evenly divided time frame extending from 1535 to 1910” cf. <http://www.12travelers.org/XIITravelers/Introduction/TomLeaLegacy/tabid/92/Default.aspx>.

language appealing to a wide audience. Marketability drove the merchandising and fundraising efforts of a fully developed artistic enterprise, further indicating the degree of commodification implied in Houser's representation of the past. The maquette for the Garcia sculpture, e.g., was advertised as "ideal for home, office, and garden display." Houser's aspiration (and economic existence) is financially backed by catering to the taste (and room size) of a supportive clientele that can afford his grand vision. Thus, while proposing to work exclusively for the cause, Houser was also striving for popularity, economic success and artistic immortality.¹⁵⁹

III.2.4 AN ARTIST'S PERSONA: REENACTING GUTZON BORGLUM

Not content to only reference Borglum's influence on his work, Houser and his team of volunteers reinforced the link through promoting *The XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* with the help of Gutzon Borglum's family, by seeking endorsement from Borglum's biographers and by John Houser's appearance as discussant in a PBS documentary on Mount Rushmore.¹⁶⁰ Congratulation on "the most exciting project since Korczak began to carve his mountain" also came from Borglum's biographers and provided additional context for the commemoration of Southwestern history on a national scale by lining Houser's project up with Korczak Ziolkowski's Crazy Horse Memorial next to Mount Rushmore National Memorial.¹⁶¹ Going well beyond biographical coincidence, Mount Rushmore and its creator are casting gigantic shadows on Houser's artistry in more than one respect. Borglum, the monomaniacal sculptor, offered Houser not only a model of aesthetic ambition in the scope of the presidential portraits but also served as a model of determination and perseverance in a project that more than once threatened to fail, entered into dire financial straits and seemed to outgrow the feasible: "The challenges that Borglum and my father faced have taught me that projects which seize the public imagination happen because there is an artist who realises he can make it happen" (Houser qtd. in Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). Like Borglum, the "lone

¹⁵⁹ Hoping to create a work enduringly popular beyond political controversy, Houser again aspired to emulate Borglum, who had achieved an "artist's fantasy of immortality come true" with the construction of Mount Rushmore; cf. Boime 1991: 165; Houser qtd. in Thompson 17 Jan. 2002.

¹⁶⁰ Borglum's daughter presented "A Man to Match a Mountain, An Idea to Match Our History" on the occasion of a fundraiser for *The XII Travelers*; cf. Davis 13 Jan. 1991, Sanchez 14 Jan. 1991. Audrey and Howard Shaff of the Borglum Historical Center congratulated Houser on his initiative and attended fundraising events; cf. Shaff 23 June 1988; Davis 13 Jan. 1991. The PBS program was part of the "American Experience" series and aired in early 2002; cf. "Mount Rushmore" 2001.

¹⁶¹ Howard and Audrey Shaff to John Houser 23 June 1988. While they primarily commended the project for its tourist potential, the Shaffs also point to the possibility of minority recognition through monumental sculpture in nationally sanctioned space. The idea of honoring minority history seems to have had less appeal for Houser given his penchant for the heroic, but a lack of reference to the Crazy Horse Memorial in publicized statements may also be attributable to his general reluctance to comment on potential rival projects.

crusader in the quest to make an enduring monument for the American republic” (Boime 1991: 153), Houser brought to the project the resolve of a lonesome fighter for the cause of Southwestern history and urban revitalization. Commentary took up the idea of his “crusade” as a further sign of affiliation with his artistic forebear (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002). Houser’s artistic persona was modeled on Borglum’s example: with regard to self-promotion and marketing, he strove to emulate the “showmanship” of “above all, a master promoter [who] knew how to get people excited” (Houser qtd. in Thompson 9 Sep. 2001). Indeed, many commentators who became involved with the artist emphasize the contagiousness and joviality of Houser’s personality and vision. The openness with which he embraced public presentations of his works and beliefs stands in marked contrast to his rejection of critique and aversion to collegial exchange.¹⁶² He styled himself as an artist-genius demanding “unqualified support from society” (Boime 1991: 148). This is reflected both in Houser’s public relations, i.e. the volunteer organization and the statements of support procured from prominent Americans, and in his carefree attitude toward contracts, deadlines and funding that plagued contract negotiations with the city. Houser describes himself through the foil of Borglum in negotiations over the project as a “difficult man,” arguing that “[c]olossal sculpture makes one so. There’s no place for compromise on faces 60 ft long from chin to hairline, not even on Washington’s eyebrow.”¹⁶³ Even his predilection for issues and characters from (colonial) history mimicks Borglum’s admiration for Columbus as “representing the legacy of the Renaissance within America” (Boime 1991: 153), reinforced by Houser’s effort to surmount the technical challenges of Leonardo da Vinci’s Sforza Horse with *The Equestrian*.¹⁶⁴ Just as Borglum had envisioned himself as the visionary of a

¹⁶² Early on, Sanchez attested to the inspirational excitement exuded by Houser in public presentations of his work in a highly positive assessment of an encounter with the artist. To him, Houser personified knowledge and discipline coupled with vision and compassion and rooted in modesty and integrity; Sanchez 1 Apr. 1991. Other reports remarked on Houser’s talent and persistence (“Debut” 30 Sep. 1996) and on his grand vision for El Paso that displayed “a world’s fair style and energy”; Herring 6 Dec. 1992.

¹⁶³ Houser qtd. in Thompson 9 Sep. 2001; cf. also Baron 7 Dec. 2003. Correspondence with Mayor Azar and the halting project development between 1988 and 1992 attest to his self-casting as “difficult.” Yet looking back on the initial phase, Houser very casually explained his public relations campaign in an interview: “We got a number of prominent individuals to write letters saying they thought it was a great idea and they supported it. And we published those in a newsletter, and that’s one of the ways we were able to arouse interest in El Paso at the beginning”; Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Houser proudly took on the technical challenge of constructing a rearing horse which had “confounded the world’s great monumental sculptors”; Thompson 17 Jan. 2002. His idea to reach for record-breaking dimensions refers to a George Washington statue in Philadelphia (1897) and to Charles Dent’s reconstruction of Da Vinci’s Sforza Monument Horse (1493; 1999) which he considered benchmarks for the upper limit of the size of equestrian sculpture; qtd. in Huff 26 Mar.-1 Apr. 2006; Ahl 1995; <http://www.leonardoshorse.org/index.asp>. Cf. also Abram 2001; McGirk 29 June 2001. Houser cited further examples from art history to underline the technical challenges and generous time frames under which other gigantic equestrian monuments had operated: While even da Vinci had avoided the subject of a rearing horse, sculptor Etienne-Maurice Falconet had taken twelve years (1770-82) for a rearing equestrian statue of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg; cf. Houser “Creating.” The

transformation of history into a monumental theater (Boime 1991: 149), Houser perceived his role as that of the creative director of the historic pageant of *The XII Travelers* (1988: 2).

It is helpful to interpret John Houser's self-fashioning as a late twentieth-century re-enactor of Gutzon Borglum through the lens of New Genre Public Art in order to understand the strand of modernism that critics like Suzi Gablik found so objectionable in Houser's project.¹⁶⁵ They take issue with Houser's approach to art as fundamentally modernist: The missionary zeal with which he promoted himself and his project reflects the "principle of selfhood" and concept of aesthetic freedom that art historian and critic Suzi Gablik described as the "myth of the hard-edged, autonomous individualist" whose "independent and self-motivated [...] consciousness seeks to impose its own images upon the world" (Gablik 1992a: 2; also 1992b: 49). While each individual 'traveler' represents and is commemorated for formidable struggles and pathbreaking achievements, the trajectory that leads to the present springs from the artist's mind and is entirely controlled by him, as reflected in Houser's periodization. Even though Houser put himself in line with his artistic predecessors and thematically privileged a genealogical approach to the past in his project, emphasizing continuities between past and present, he also betrayed another feature of the modernist tradition in his obsession with personal authorship (cf. Green 1999: 81). Houser's claims to the "myths of neutrality and autonomy" (Gablik 1992a: 6) as well as his dedication to the idea of a "monument to principles" (Romo 27 Nov. 1990) constitute further instances of a modernist impulse at ordering experience in an increasingly complex and contradictory world. Houser's focus on individual experience represents a modernist legacy that recreates *The XII Travelers* as an assembly of "isolated ego-subject[s], bent on individuation through separation" where the controversial Oñate becomes a figure steeped in "traditions of separation and heroic independence" that view other people and the world as "essentially alien forces" (Gablik 1992a: 6). Even the choice of expressive form, an equestrian sculpture,

medieval concept of equestrian statues as funerary memorials changed toward a celebratory assertion of political power during the Renaissance and the Sforza horse was a prime example. Selecting an equestrian monument to render the past is thus in itself not an innocent choice. The issue of surpassing the Philadelphia monument in size assumes added significance when one considers that historians like Marc Simmons have referred to Oñate as the "George Washington of the Southwest."

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Lacy coined the term New Genre Public Art; it is rooted in what Suzi Gablik called "connective aesthetics" and proposes a paradigm of art as participation and interaction (Green 1999: 80), redefining art making as engaging in and responsive to contemporary concerns; cf. Green 1999: 80, 81; Lacy 1995; Gablik 1992a: 6; Raven 1993. Baron introduced the issue of aesthetic paradigms in public art to the debate about Houser's project, citing the datedness of his approach and obsolescence of the form in view of an increasing number of reception-, action- and event-oriented forms of public art that privilege the building of community over the constructing of objects (Lacy) and announce the closing of an era of bronze statues in parks and abstract sculpture next to skyscrapers; cf. Baron Jan. 2001.

can be read as another evocation of the discourse of the “dominator model of culture” (Gablik 1992b: 50).

IV TOWARDS A DIALOGIC PERSPECTIVE?

Why should style and self-fashioning, art history and artistic training, be of such concern to the commemoration of a colonial figure in twenty-first century El Paso? Art activist Richard Baron offered an easy indictment in citing sculptor Lisa Norton’s dictum that “Gigantism is essentially dishonest” (Baron Oct. 1990), followed by sophisticated critique of the artist’s proceeding with the city (Oct. 1990) and more recently of the project’s uninvestigated assumptions (7 Dec. 2003). Bias and amnesia, however, are not only a result of the monument’s gigantesque dimensions. Reason for protest predominantly rests on the unspoken assumption that, like Mount Rushmore, the *XII Travelers* project carries on a synthesizing, consensus-oriented tradition of modernist monumentalism that revolves around the question of “what it means to be an American” (Lincoln Borglum qtd. in Boime 1991: 142), as evidenced in Antonio Piña’s generalized claim to Hispanic history or in statements that propose that “El Paso’s history is America’s History. And it is México’s history” (Martinez 2003). It was thus the spirit and perspective communicated not just in the project’s controversial theme but also in its artistic lineage and style that protestors found offensive. They resented the theme of *The XII Travelers* because it offered a prequel to the “summary of American conquest” expressed in Borglum’s monument (Boime 1991: 150). The commemoration of westward expansion that resonates also in Houser’s indebtedness to Lea’s perspective on the past was incompatible with Chicano activists’ ideas of the “distinctive character” of a border city. Houser had constructed an authoritative narrative of the regional past through the selection of twelve emblematic figures communicating historical knowledge in a monumental monologue. He had assumed the imperial point of view of “magisterial aesthetics” in a style that in Boime’s terms inspires a sense of mastery and control rooted in the experience of power and domination (1991: 144). Imposing the magisterial gaze on the urban landscape of El Paso amounted to re-inscribing the cultural landscape with a cultural master narrative of “Americanness” that originated in the center of American power rather than in the liminal location of the multicultural, bi-national borderlands.

Originally designed to “commemorate a human struggle, one characterized by great hardship and even greater cruelties, but one that indisputably and indelibly marks the culture of the New World” (Thompson 17 Jan. 2002), Houser’s Oñate consistently failed to address the question of the manifold Other, object of and subject to what is euphemistically framed as

‘colonial encounter.’ Under its apparently more neutral name, *The Equestrian* superficially replaces references to subjugation with images of beginnings, proposing to commemorate the introduction of the horse and the “arrival of Spanish culture in the Southwest” and thus continuing to serve as the founding figure for the Hispanic Southwest.¹⁶⁶ While Houser claimed to acknowledge diversity and to reach for inclusivity in the theme of his project, his aesthetics still most strongly adhered to “the modern tradition of self that derives from conquest and erasure of the other” (Gablik 1992: 6). His representation of Juan de Oñate de facto incorporates “the entire history of Spanish colonization of the American Southwest, its annexation by the United States, race relations on the US-Mexico border, the treatment of Native Americans, and contemporary identity politics,” as one scholar observed (Burke 12 Jan. 2004). Yet far from truly addressing the question of the Other conceptually, Houser substituted for it an “inclusion of minorities” that was, as his critics had remarked, at best superficial. The objections raised towards Houser’s project thus issued a comprehensive call to “move *beyond* acknowledgment of diversity and to question and challenge the dominant culture’s art world canons and structures,” aiming to “expose and challenge all types of oppression” (Chalmers qtd. in Green 1999: 83, emphasis mine).

Protesters targeted this remaking of a shared space in the spirit and image of conquest. Instead they demanded integration of the Other into the discourse about the past. The required move from a monumental/mono-mental discourse to forms of dialogue with the marginalized represents “a shift from self-assertion to integration” (Gablik 1992: 4), suggesting a paradigm shift not just with regard to concepts of ethnic identity that break with the notion of ethnic nationalism but also with regard to novel ways of representing the multicultural human condition based on a connective or relational aesthetics. Integration into larger social contexts emerges as a perpetual process as the communities struggle to give their collective experiences form and meaning:

Inviting in the other makes art more socially responsive [...] to create a wider view of the world. The relational self knows that it is embedded in larger systems and tends toward integration. The independent self is invested in self-assertion. Both are necessary. What I am

¹⁶⁶ Wilson Nov. 2003; Abram 2001; cf. also “Controversial Statue” 4 Nov. 2003; Houser & Schwartz 28 Oct. 2004. Houser held on to the notion of “Hispanic contributions” when he referred to Oñate as the point of origin for “the horse, Hispanic culture, food, religion and the language to produce the rich and distinctive character of our region”; McGirk 29 June 2001; also Abram 2001. Even in his most recent programmatic statements, Houser refers to the creation of the region as a process of introduction (supposing a creation *ex nihilo*) rather than subjugation (that would have had to consider the resident population). He recurs to benign images of birth, heritage, and traditions rather than addressing the realities of oppression, violence, and death, glossing over the fact that what he referred to as the “sweep of an era” was also responsible for wiping out part of the population (Houser 2003).

suggesting is not to abandon one in favor of the other but to find a greater balance between the two. (Gablik 1992: 6)

While Houser noticed the contradictions and challenges of connecting the individual lived experience within a multicultural context to artistic expression, and while he ostensibly strove for “recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living” (Dewey qtd. in Green 1999: 82), there are several deficiencies in his aesthetic approach that fail his project: He naturalizes rather than confronts the contradictions inherent in his concept, declaring cultural conflict (and the resulting extermination of people) “inevitable” and pitting diverse groups against each other as agents and victims respectively (Houser 2003, Valadez & Ibarra 2008). In demarcating different groups and their interests, Houser prepares the way for (and eventually succumbs to) commodification of the past and to the consumption of difference. Exploiting the past and the Other for marketable fragments prevents the realization of an alternative, inclusive vision that might construct social coherence in recognition and respect of “intersubjective coexistence and community” (Gablik 1992b: 51). In addition to the other factors contributing to the monologicality of Houser’s perspective and expressive form, intersubjectivity may well be the crux of Houser’s failure to achieve commemorative significance for the *XII Travelers* in El Paso: Although the ‘Last Conquistador’ “raises troubling questions about race, power, the responsibility of the artist and the meaning of public art in an age of multicultural values and conflicting visions of the past” (Valadez & Ibarra 2008), Houser reduces the significance of *The Equestrian* to the problem of individual identity in a multicultural society, arguing that the ambivalent subject has replaced the coherent iconic personality, or role model. Never stopping to examine the processes of individual identification for their constructivist implications, he moves on to define collective identity in a time-worn pluralist framework when he proclaims the present as the era of “one people of diverse cultures, races and ideas struggling towards a common future” (Houser 2003) and thus reintroduces the notion of “e pluribus unum.” Contending that “Art is Subjective,” he reveals his understanding of art to be subject-centered rather than community-oriented, and while there may be room in such an understanding to account for the ambivalent subject, the experience of intersubjective ambivalence may indeed call for a new aesthetics capable of bridging the divide between monoculture and multiculture, individual and community, sense of the past and sense of place that the debates about the *XII Travelers Memorial of the Southwest* laid bare. Considering Houser’s predicament, the new aesthetics will likely have to originate in dialogue.

DIALOGUE

ALCALDE AND A MISSING FOOT

[T]he only history befitting a democratic society is one that inspires a frank and searching dialogue with the past. It stresses the role of people as active agents in the making of their own history – for good or bad. To understand this is to be empowered by history, for it is to perceive that the ordinary individual does count.

(Gary Nash qtd. in Ruiz 1993: 247)

In the rear patio of the Oñate Monument Visitors Center northeast of Española on New Mexico 68 stands the 1991 bronze statue of conquistador Juan de Oñate. In 1998 New Mexico celebrated the 400th anniversary of his arrival. Pueblo Indians and their partisans chose not to join the party. Instead, they marked the quadricentennial by cutting off the statue's right foot.

(Loewen 1999: 119)

This, in a nutshell, is the story of the the Oñate Monument and Visitors Center (OMVC) in Alcalde, situated in the Española Valley along the highway between Santa Fe and Taos in northern New Mexico. The case study marks a discursive turning point, for OMVC is a site of memory where commemoration is demonstrably shifting from the monumentalization of a historic event personified in a representative figure, as we have seen predominantly in El Paso in the previous chapter, to the memorialization of a process of cultural encounter and change acted out in and tied to space, as we will see epitomized in Albuquerque in the fourth chapter. Monument and visitor center mark the northernmost extent of Oñate's colonizing expedition and the site of the first permanent Hispanic settlement in the Southwestern United States; during the Cuatrocenenario celebrations, Oñate's *Camino Real* was used to connect individual sites of memory and thence to establish the region as a meaningful spatial unit of investigation. The Oñate sculpture in Alcalde functions as a site of memory on three levels: First, it recalls the violence of colonial encounter and cultural conflict in an act of symbolic retaliation, committed at the height of controversy about Oñate's historical significance in the cutting off of the statue's foot. It also evokes a tradition of local resistance to cultural encroachment and spatial dispossession that is more deeply hidden in the landscapes of northern New Mexico. Finally, it spatially constructs a frame of identification for Hispanics in New Mexico by reference to a specific cultural region of the Southwest, the Hispano homeland.

The following chapter offers a historical and spatial contextualization for OMVC as a site of memory in a first section. The second section addresses the establishment and deconstruction of OMVC and assesses the purposes for which the center was designed, elucidating its educational and identificatory function with regard to the spatial images invoked. A third section identifies central images and strategies of commemoration with regard to their cultural and political implications. The fourth as well as the concluding sections are dedicated to investigating the ways that New Mexicans establish conversations with the local past: How they connect to national acts of commemoration, how they reflect on the ambiguities of the historical record and how they participate in transforming historical awareness.

I.1.1 HISTORICAL PRELIMINARIES: SETTING THE STAGE FOR OÑATE

The expeditions of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado between 1540 and 1542 concluded a first phase of imperial expansion in the Americas and prepared the ground for a phase of interior consolidation. For several decades, a “mining-slaving-ranching frontier” (Kessell 1979) crept north, producing its own conflict in the Chichimeca Wars and forming a novel frontier elite of independent *ricos*, mine owners bestowed with hereditary titles and privileges in return for their conquering services to the crown (cf. Jimenez 1998: 113).¹⁶⁷ In 1583, King Philip II of Spain reinstated colonization of *Nuevo México* in the name of evangelization, justifying expansion into the Indian territories by reframing conquest as ‘pacification’ and. Expeditions were put under direct control of the Council of the Indies and to be privately financed: “Little disturbed by former failures the king authorized the viceroy of New Spain to execute a contract with someone who would raise an army at his own expense, enlist colonists, equip them for settlement, provision all, and make conquest of the territory on the north” (Nesbitt 1931: 290).¹⁶⁸ As was common on the frontier, the future governor would enjoy civilian and military titles and privileges, a number of them hereditary.

Weber (1992) suggests that beyond pious and economic motives geopolitical interest and spatial fantasies motivated the renewed interest in the northern vastness: On the one hand, colonization of New Mexico was to secure New Spain’s northern frontier against the native population. On the other hand, exploration was motivated by the myth of the Seven Cities of Cibola or the search for Quivira, reflecting hopes for a repetition of the silver bonanza in the Sierras and, more intangibly perhaps, the expectation to conquer another Native American empire. Exploration also aimed at verifying the nautical legend of the Strait of Anián, a proposed sea passage between the Atlantic and Pacific. Strategically, expansion into New Mexico (and Florida) provided Spain with a northern foothold before competing European powers could challenge Spanish claims to colonization or take an interest in overseas expansion themselves. Owing to geographical misconceptions about the northern landmass, colonial Spaniards at the time were only beginning to understand and imagine North America as another continent (80, 82; cf. also Simmons 1991: 62). Thus, unbeknown to the colonizer of New Mexico and his sovereign, Juan de Oñate would lay one of the foundations, however precarious, for permanent European settlement in North America (Weber 1992: 78, 87).

¹⁶⁷ Chichimeca was the pejorative term given the semi-nomadic tribes of the mountains and high deserts in northern New Spain. The Chichimeca Wars mark a prolonged period of native resistance, covering most of the second half of the sixteenth century; cf. Kessell 1979, ch. 2.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. also Timmons n.d.; Simmons 1991; McGeagh 1990.

The new Viceroy's office initiated a detailed review process of Oñate's contract (Simmons 1991: 67; Weber 1992: 81; Sanchez 1998: 90). Between 1595 and 1598, Oñate entertained more than 500 prospective settlers to eventually honor his original commitment.¹⁶⁹ Originating from many provinces of New Spain, they reflected the mosaic of colonial society in the mix of peninsular Iberians with *mestizos* and indigenous Mexicans. More than eighty *carretas* or wooden ox carts carried the provisions and belongings of the settlers, herders and drivers who moved about 7,000 head of livestock, comprising mules, cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Ten Franciscan friars accompanied the expedition. On January 26, 1598, the expedition left the mining town of Santa Bárbara, then the northern terminus of the *Camino Real* from Mexico City, for a six-month *entrada* (entry) through unfamiliar, yet by no means virgin territory. A scouting party tested the route that unlike earlier explorations headed straight north, crossing waterless stretches of the Chihuahuan desert.

I.1.2 OÑATE IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO: CREATING A NEW-WORLD LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY

The exploratory ventures to the north that preceded Oñate's expedition had yielded little in terms of the Spaniards' expectations, yet with them began the transformation of the New Mexican landscape: Oñate's literal forerunners incorporated *Nuevo México* into the store of topographical knowledge when they renamed features of the land and reported on resources and inhabitants.¹⁷⁰

With Oñate's expedition the process of spatial transformation took permanent form. The scouting party which explored the territory both verified and complemented extant reports as they recorded the peculiarities of settlement and mapped the striking features of the alien landscape. The colonists made the land their own by tying the alien spaces to well-ordered time and familiar spaces, for example by naming the topography according to the calendar of saints (*San Juan Bautista* for a settlement reached on June 24) or based on analogies with the landscapes of Spain or Mexico (*Nueva Sevilla*). They also organized the new spaces with reference to their own temporal experience, attaching the memory of significant occurrences of their journey to specific sites, such as the death of expedition member Pedro de Robledo (*Paraje de Robledo*, *Robledo Mountain*), a particularly challenging stretch of trail (*Jornada del Muerto*) or delivery from hardship (*Socorro*) (cf. Simmons 1991:

¹⁶⁹ As most sources document only men of fighting age and the 129 soldiers on the muster roll were in many cases accompanied by women, children, servants and slaves, the numbers represent an estimate; cf. Weber 1992: 81; Simmons 1991: 96.

¹⁷⁰ Weber (1992) details the expeditions, some of them unauthorized, that preceded the royal contract for colonization awarded Juan de Oñate by Viceroy Luis de Velasco on September 21, 1595; see also McGeagh 1990; Simmons 1991.

100, 106), thus immortalizing them. Experiences of the journey and of encounter with the unknown inhabitants of the new land were thus emplaced, and from the beginning, as in other contexts of colonization, the land was appropriated and inscribed as a landscape of memory where novel experiences were anchored in the shared past of the colonists at the same time that they were made significant for the future. The narratives that accompanied colonization, be they legal or literary reports, were emplotted in terms of divine providence which provided both justification and motivation for another chosen people that traversed the desert in search of its New Canaan.¹⁷¹

I.1.3 ARRIVAL AND CONFLICT

Further north in the irrigable lands of the *Rio Abajo* (Lower Rio Grande Valley) where different Pueblo groups farmed, a pattern of encounter emerged: Memories of violent encounters with previous explorers prompted the native inhabitants to withdraw from their villages, often taking their stores of corn and other grains with them, leaving it to the new arrivals to initiate exchange and declare their intentions. Consequently, Oñate repeated the official act “of obedience and vassalage” with the help of his interpreters at every pueblo he visited.¹⁷² He also summoned the leaders of all the Pueblo settlements he had encountered to a Keres pueblo which earlier Spanish explorers had christened Santo Domingo in order to confirm his future rule as governor of the province in a reading of the act of obedience and vassalage that explained the reasons for his coming before a collective audience of Pueblos. He demanded submission to Spanish rule and promised eternal gains in the afterlife (cf. Weber 1992: 77). The act of subjugation was hardly openly resisted on the side of the Pueblo Indians as the memory of “war by fire and sword” that earlier explorers had waged was apparently still fresh in their minds.

The colonists reached their final destination in the high valley where the Rio Chama merges with the Rio Grande, the present-day Española Valley (cf. also Sharpe Dec. 1991: 46). They established the first provincial capital at the site of Okhe Owingeh, renamed San Juan, in July 1598.¹⁷³ Oñate had completed a colonizing expedition that extended the *Camino Real* over 600 miles north from Santa Bárbara. Reports indicate that the settlers moved into the

¹⁷¹ Weber remarks how *La Toma* was discursively framed to echo the Book of Genesis (1992: 77). Simmons refers to passages in Villagrà’s epic that explicitly draw on images of Israel’s exodus from Egypt (1991: 98).

¹⁷² Bolton cites the document as “Treslado [...] de las obediencias y vassalaje que los Indios de algunos pueblos de los dichos Reynos y provincias le dieron en el dicho nombre” (1916: 206).

¹⁷³ Following Bolton (1916), Sanchez (1998) refers to the original settlement as Caypa, repeating an apparent error on the part of the author of the *Itinerario*. Hammond and Rey corrected the location (1953: 321n21). Since then the original settlement is referred to as Ohke or Ohke Owingeh, the place name just recently adopted again by the Pueblo of San Juan.

cleared pueblo of San Gabriel (Yuque Yunque) on the opposite bank of the river and began to build a church which was dedicated on September 8, 1598. Bolton takes this event as the official founding date of the province of New Mexico (1916: 203). The event was accompanied by major ceremonies, including a pageant entitled *Moros y Cristianos*, a mock battle that spectacularly reenacted the *reconquista* on the Iberian peninsula. It may well have served to provide the settlers with a sign of hope for eventual victory in the face of precarious circumstances, and the Pueblo with a signal that resistance would be doomed (cf. Sanchez 1998: 96; McGeagh 1990: 33).

Despite the indirect warnings, especially at Acoma discontent and latent resistance began to form early on because the Spanish settlers relied on the Pueblos' supplies of corn and other staple foods and extracted cloth and other goods from the indigenous population (cf. Weber 1992: 85). Although the official reports to the Viceroy related an orderly colonization process, Oñate's own people were aware that indigenous unrest was rising owing to constant violation of the protection granted the native population by the *Ordenanzas*. During the trial of the rebellious Acoma, Franciscan friar Juan de Escalona gave the following reasons for the pueblo of Acoma's rebellion:

They destroy and break their walls to get their corn out of their houses. They solicit blankets by forcibly removing them from poor Indian women, who often do not have another; women are left crying and curled up naked with a child in their arms. This is the reason why Acoma went to war. [...] We cannot preach the gospel now, for it is despised by these people on account of our great offenses and the harm we have done them. ("Letter to Viceroy" Oct 1, 1601)¹⁷⁴

In early December 1598, a party led by Oñate's nephew Juan de Zaldivar requested Acoma to trade with him for food and blankets. Upon entering the village, the Spanish party was dispersed and attacked. Only four of the party of seventeen who climbed to the mesa-top village survived. Sources differ as to whether the Spanish soldiers themselves provoked the attack through exaggerated demands and aggressive behavior or fell victim to a plot (cf. Garcia-Mason 1979; Sanchez 1998: 99-101, McGeagh 1990: 34). Frightened, the settlers at San Juan took this aggression as just the beginning of hostilities. In Oñate's logic, the attack represented a disruption of the "general peace of the land" and posed a "serious danger of revolting if the offenders are not properly punished, as their vileness would be emulated by other savages whenever they wished" ("Trial" 456). The alliance of different Pueblo leaders that Zutacapan built after the attack could most likely have erased the fledgling colony, a fear clearly expressed in the testimony later given by one of Oñate's captains on the occasion of

¹⁷⁴ Qtd. in Rabasa 1993; cf. also Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998.

the trial of the vanquished Acoma: “This witness [Capt. Gerónimo Márquez] is sure that if this pueblo [Acoma] is not leveled and its inhabitants punished, there will be no security in all of New Mexico, nor could it be settled, as the natives of the pueblos are watching what we do at Acoma and whether we punish them” (“Trial” 433).¹⁷⁵ Back in San Juan, Oñate consulted with the missionaries about reasons for waging a “just war” and resolved to execute an exemplary retaliation in order to discourage any further revolt in the province.

Oñate had “war without quarter” declared on Acoma by his lieutenant-governor Vicente de Saldivar on January 21, 1599, after Acoma had rejected unconditional surrender to the Spanish (“Trial” 461). The soldiers besieged, overran and razed the village in a bloody three-day battle that left more than 600 Acoma dead. About 500 people were taken prisoner and tried in February 1599 “according to military usage” (“Trial” 463). Most of them were sentenced to 20 years of personal servitude, and the males of fighting age, i.e. those older than 25, were subjected to the infamous sentence of having a foot severed.¹⁷⁶ The detailed report on the trial emphasizes that “the said sentence was carried out in the pueblo of Santo Domingo and other towns nearby [...] on different days” (“Trial” 478). The public “warning to everyone in this kingdom” (“Trial” 459) effectively suppressed further resistance until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.¹⁷⁷

I.1.4 OÑATE’S DEMISE

From the beginning, Oñate tried to justify the expenses of his colonization and the initial failure to locate silver through further exploration covering the territory between Kansas and the Pacific rather than by establishing an operable colony. The repeated absence of the leaders of the colony due to these explorations left the settlers vulnerable to the harsh frontier conditions. The orphaned colony split into opposing factions of colonists and militarists, and the soldiers’ predilection for glorious exploration preempted sustainable development of the civilian settlement (Ivey 2003; Jimenez 1998). Consequently, San Juan barely supported its population. Worsening conditions provoked threats of mutiny and desertion among the colonists, which Oñate was initially able to contain by issuing severe punishments (cf.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. also “Trial” 455-56; also qtd. in Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998.

¹⁷⁶ Considering the life expectancy, the sentences amounted to lifelong slavery, yet there are voices who claim that many native servants were released by the colonists (cf. Garcia-Mason 1979: 457). The manner in which the sentences were executed has also been debated among scholars. Donald Garate refers to papers by Eloy Gallegos and by John Kessell presented at different *Cuartocentenario* conferences in 1998 which suggest that the amputations may have been milder or not intended to be carried out at all (1998: 129n2). However, as there are more instances of excessive violence, such as the pursuit and beheading of four deserting colonists as well as reports of the violent Jumano War, one must assume that the way in which resistance at Acoma was put down was the rule rather than the exception in the colonial encounter led by Oñate.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Garcia-Mason 1979: 456-57; Sanchez 1998: 101-05; McGeagh 1990: 34-37; Weber 1992: 85-86.

Sanchez 1998: 106; Weber 1992: 85; McGeagh 1990: 38). Yet in 1601, upon his return from exploring the Plains, Oñate found the colony abandoned but for his most loyal adherents; the majority of the settlers had returned to New Spain (cf. Weber 1992: 86; McGeagh 1990: 38). Oñate continued to explore and build from a diminished base, but the charges of undue violence against Indians and colonists as well as of mismanagement of the colony and neglect of his contract that were brought before the Viceroy caused him to be recalled to Mexico City for investigation (1608). Consequently, he had to resign his governorship and in 1614 was found guilty and banned permanently from the province he had opened. In addition, he lost all of his titles (cf. McGeagh 1990: 39-40; Weber 1992: 86-87; Sanchez 1998: 105-106). Back in Spain, he managed to clear his name under the rule of a new king, and died as a Royal Inspector of Mines in June 1626. Still in his lifetime, his captain Gaspar de Villagr  immortalized Oñate in the *Historia de la Nueva Mexico* (1610).

Oñate was succeeded as governor by Pedro de Peralta who in 1610 moved the capital to the newly established *villa* of Santa Fe. The proprietary colony survived as an isolated frontier outpost mainly due to Franciscan initiative. It was almost eradicated during the years of the Pueblo Revolt and slowly developed into a culturally distinct Spanish exclave throughout the eighteenth century. Four centuries later, those who might well be descendants of Oñate's party are trying to have his image and his ambivalent legacy cast in bronze. As the initiator of the first lasting act of conquest of the people and the land that became New Mexico, Oñate has left an ambivalent spatial and temporal legacy to twenty-first century *Nuevomexicanos*.

Oñate's achievement – the reason for his commemoration – is measured in terms of his successful expedition north during spring and summer of 1598, crowned by the establishment of the first Spanish capital in this part of the Americas at Ohke Owingeh or San Juan. At the same time, it is compromised by the cataclysmic Battle of Acoma in January 1599. In 1998, the state of New Mexico prepared for a series of festive events celebrating the 400th anniversary of 'Spanish arrival.' In reenactments and in monuments, following the historic route of the *Camino Real* and reposing in the original places, Juan de Oñate, colonizer of *Nuevo M xico* and first crosser of the literal and symbolic borders of Indian country, rode again through the rural and urban spaces of New Mexico, U.S.A. As in the past, his presence was not welcome to all.

I.2.1 OÑATE IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO: END OF A JOURNEY?

In the early stages of my research, the Oñate Monument and Visitor Center (OMVC) at Alcalde was the only site that offered tangible evidence of the controversial debates about commemoration of Oñate. Questions revolving around the consequences of the Spanish expedition for Native lands and around appropriate forms of re-presentation of the regional past had divided New Mexico even before the state anniversary of 1998. This is reflected in the Oñate center as well. Therefore, and in order to convey a sense of the elusiveness of the places where the contested New Mexican past has materialized, I will take the liberty of offering an arrival story of my own:

Heading north from Santa Fe on N.M. 68 for my first visit, my attention was focused on orienteering marks for OMVC; however, the visitor center is easily missed as the pinkish one-story building blends perfectly into the highway landscape between Santa Fe and Taos – and none of the five flag posts in front of the center were flying a flag that day (Fig. 7). The equestrian statue of Juan de Oñate was concealed behind the building, facing the wide expanse of the valley rather than highway traffic. The front door facing the highway was locked, so I walked to the rear of the building. A wall separates the grounds of OMVC from the road. This wall and the layout of the enclosure suggest an orientation of the center toward the stretch of open valley to the east of the building rather than toward the traffic and settlement to its west. Landscaping within the enclosure integrates features of the local cultural landscape, including fruit trees and the dome-shaped *horno* oven typical for the Rio Arriba. It appears designed to offer a characteristic New Mexico vista: the woodwork of a colonial style *ramada* frames Truchas Peak and La Jicarita as they touch clear New Mexico skies. The Oñate sculpture was placed at the end of a shaded walkway, facing north and suggesting the direction of both the historic *Camino Real* and the modern-day road (Fig. 8). During this visit, however, I was unable to gather any more than visual impressions – this being the Saturday before Easter, the visitor center was closed.

I returned for an interview with the interim director in fall 2005. By then, the sculpture had been relocated to the front of the visitor center building for better highway visibility. The larger-than-life-sized sculpture by Reynaldo “Sonny” Rivera is placed on a concrete pedestal amid a landscaped patch in front of the balustrade that frames the little flag pole plaza. The figure of “El Adelantado don Juan de Oñate” stands twelve feet high and bears no visible sign of the quadricentennial foot removal (Fig. 9). This time around I had also noticed a sign announcing the visitor center, maybe fifteen miles down the road, even before entering the city of Española. Still, the turnoff onto the gravel embankment and parking lot was no more conspicuous or inviting than during the earlier visit. The director was awaiting me in her

office just behind the gift shop. There were no other visitors during the morning hours but for helpers who prepared an afternoon social event. OMVC modestly presents itself as a community center rather than a commemorative institution, although security in the form of a police car and a guard's trailer were present on the grounds. None of the bravura displayed in defense of Oñate during the controversy of 1998 is communicated by the building and its setting. The grandeur of the landscape and, highway aside, truly magnificent location reflect the center's cultural and political ambitions at the same time that they indicate the tension underlying OMVC with regard to its actual significance and political implications. Blending into the landscape to the degree of inconspicuousness, the center conveys discomfort with its quadricentennial prominence. Therefore, my contextualization of the site of memory will now turn to the real-and-imagined spaces of New Mexico that frame the OMVC.

I.2.2 OÑATE IN RIO ARRIBA COUNTY: LOCATING MEMORIES IN THE LANDSCAPE

OMVC itself is located outside the village of Alcalde on the far side of State Road 68. It occupies a stretch of Rio Arriba county land that had formerly been the *ejido* (commonly used land) of the Sebastian Martin grant. Part of this land grant dates to 1712 and thus the village legally originated in one of the post-Reconquista grants of northern New Mexico. Consequently, especially because of the *ejido* parts of the grant whose property status did not match the U.S. legal principle of individual land ownership, OMVC is located on a section of those public lands in New Mexico that due to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo fell under federal jurisdiction and were administered by U.S. agencies. Rather than neutral ground, it thus represents a terrain contested by its political re-designation and marked by tensions between county and federal, i.e. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), bureaucracies, in addition to the controversial historical theme commemorated at the site.¹⁷⁸

The cultural landscape of Alcalde is fairly typical of the dispersed linear villages in rural northern New Mexico that follow the Spanish pattern: settlement is aligned along country roads with long lots of cultivated land stretching to the Rio Grande river.¹⁷⁹ Its proximity to San Juan and San Gabriel several miles to the south connect it to the history of early colonial settlement. While in the late nineteenth century the arrival of the railroad provided a modest economic stimulus for the marginal region, Alcalde has remained a small,

¹⁷⁸ Rodriguez & Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997. The column details the size of the grant as 51,000 acres and points to its association with Carson National Forest. Citing a manuscript by García, Trujillo also detailed funding and property relations (2005: 121).

¹⁷⁹ Carlson (1990, 1992) and Nostrand (1970, 1984, 1990) count long lots and settlement dispersion among the characteristic features of the northern New Mexican landscape, cf. also Smith 1998: 440; Abel 3 June 1997. For an impression of the traditional settlement pattern in northern New Mexico cf. also Rodriguez and Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997; Abel 23 June 1997.

close-knit agricultural community of close to 400 residents, 90% of them Hispanic. Although they may be facing an uncertain future as a farming community, residents are upholding the tradition of water management through *acequias* in ways that have become exemplary for the state.¹⁸⁰ Their efforts to establish sustainable forms of land use have been acknowledged by locating the Sustainable Agriculture Science Center in Alcalde, as an extension of New Mexico State University that responds to local small farmers' concerns. It also seems no coincidence that former OMVC director Estevan Arellano promotes and himself works in sustainable land use projects.¹⁸¹

The nearby town of Española represents the regional commercial center and markets itself as the heart of northern New Mexico with regard to architecture, mix of people and pace of life. According to official declarations about the city, visitors can sample "the true essence of traditional *norteño* culture" in a place where ancient memories are cherished and preserved. Española is thus constructed as the authentic counterpart to the artifice of Santa Fe or Taos: "[M]odern-day Santa Fe, at least on the surface, is a sort of fantasy – an out-of-control invention of some clever public relations whiz, with its carefully-packaged mud look and smooth, marketable charm. / In rough and ready Española [...] you'll find no historic-adobe building code" (Wall May 1996). Notwithstanding the contrast, Española shares the commodification of regional history: The town has construed settlement continuity since the times of first colonization even though the Pueblo Revolt that began in nearby San Juan disrupted the colony. While Española proper dates back only to the railroad era, it was recently reinvented as a colonial Spanish town through a downtown revitalization project, *Misión y Convento*, that utilized a replica of the original church at San Gabriel to stimulate downtown business and attract tourists (cf. Wall May 1996; Randolph July 2001). Although the town has benefited from employment opportunities offered at the Los Alamos National Laboratories and from business relocations avoiding the tight real estate market of Santa Fe, and despite its magnificent landscape setting, Española still represents a marginal community challenged by high rates of outmigration, drug crime and poverty. Consequently, it figures most prominently in chamber of commerce prose rather than in other cultural expressions, with the notable exceptions of lowrider culture and the Matachines dance, as Michael Trujillo pointed out in his ethnography (2005: 59).¹⁸² Nevertheless, the robust sense of self promoted

¹⁸⁰ Hay (Mar. 1997) also characterized the area as made up of "towns and villages with substantial traditions and histories" intent on protecting their unique cultures and environment.

¹⁸¹ cf. Trapp 11 Aug. 2005. Arellano works and lobbies for sustainable development and new forms of community administration and promotion in rural Rio Arriba communities; cf. Abel 23 June 1997; Walser 9 Dec. 2002; Morse 7 July 2005; <http://alcaldesc.nmsu.edu>.

¹⁸² For programmatic self-promotion of Española cf. Hay Mar. 1997; Randolph July 2001; Wall May 1996. Trujillo's dissertation offers a lucid interpretation of northern New Mexican identity formations and brilliantly

in Española resonates with the symbolic significance attributed to northern New Mexico: The horizon of cultural meanings that were ascribed the Rio Arriba is indicated in popular designations such as ‘Indian country,’ ‘Land of Enchantment’ and ‘*Hispano* homeland’ that expand the significance of the region beyond its immediate topographical limits. Yet these expansive designations only become poignant when read locally and thus inventing Española and Rio Arriba County as ‘an Other Santa Fe’ or ‘anti-Santa Fe’ implies a tradition of resistance to foreign encroachment that is claimed as a feature that has set the area apart since the mid-nineteenth century.

In economic terms, Rio Arriba County is one of the poorest counties in the state of New Mexico and, by implication, the United States (cf. Calloway 19 Sep. 1999). The federal presence and intervention there underline its economic dependency. Stretching between and partly also hosting the traditional tourist destinations of Santa Fe and Taos (including the *Santuario de Chimayo*, Georgia O’Keefe’s Abiquiu and the archaeological sites of Bandelier National Monument, for example), the county has tried to divert the tourist streams from Santa Fe and Taos by way of ‘historic’ attractions such as OMVC or *Misión y Convento* and to prompt visitors to spend some money. Such attempts at connecting the county to the cash flow generated by the well-established tourist industry of northern New Mexico that dates back to the late nineteenth century represent one way of coping with the forces and challenges of cultural change that the county is facing. Another strategy has been the cultural reinvention of the region and its inhabitants.

After four hundred years of mutual exchange between autochthonous populations and newcomers, the area where Oñate proclaimed his first colonial settlement on Native American soil has become a richly storied land. While some stories are merely enacted before the scenic backdrop of northern New Mexico, others build on the intricate relation of the land and its inhabitants. Literally taking place, the identities that are built on and from the land have often been in conflict with each other, as the development of the Onate Monument and Visitor Center will show.

contextualizes present-day Española and the Española Valley in the ethnographic literature, both with regard to village ethnographies by Kutsche (1979), Kutsche and Van Ness (1981) and Briggs (1980), and with regard to the more obscure ethnographies on Española by Jimenez (1974) and Whitecotton (1970, 1976, 1996); cf. Trujillo 2005: 34-66. For lowrider culture cf. also Bright 1998. The Española Valley also gained sad notoriety as a hub of drug trafficking and related crime; cf. Glendinning 2004.

II BETWEEN RE-ENACTMENT AND RESISTANCE: THE ONATE MONUMENT AND VISITORS CENTER, ALCALDE, NEW MEXICO

Early in my political career I resolved that some day I would try to give the memory of Oñate fitting recognition by constructing a lasting monument to the colonizer of the Southwestern United States. Now the time has come, and plans for the construction of a monument and visitor center dedicated to Juan de Oñate are being implemented in the Rio Arriba County Commission. The complex is slated for completion during the Columbus Quincentennial in 1992. One of the major goals is to spread the knowledge of Juan de Oñate and the colonization of New Mexico.

(Senator Emilio Naranjo; McGeagh 1990: 8)

The story of the Oñate Monument and Visitors Center (OMVC) begins like a replay of the project in El Paso: Devised in the context of the Columbus Quincentennial, OMVC unfolded as a monologue of one man who managed to muster enough support in the right places, who obtained sufficient funding to impart his perspective on the regional past through public art, and who committed it to the future for use by a local community without much caring for that community's input. Rio Arriba County Chairman Emilio Naranjo proposed the center and monument, and in March 1990 a resolution of the Rio Arriba County Commission established OMVC as a New Mexican contribution to the Columbus Quincentenary of 1992.¹⁸³ The several-million-dollar investment has been branded a "pork barrel project," a product of political patronage and favoritism that represents a monument to senior Senator Naranjo rather than conquistador Juan de Oñate.¹⁸⁴ This perceived flagrant political insensitivity provoked criticism and compromised the center in several respects: Critics deplored the

¹⁸³ Cf. McGeagh 1990: 6; Trujillo 2005: 121. The neglect of local, potentially dissenting opinion became especially evident in complaints from the Eight Northern Pueblos Council who had been denied consultation prior to the county resolution. Given the context of debates revolving around the Columbus Quincentennial celebrations, such rejection of 'outside interference' was all the more striking; cf. "Indians Had No Say" 29 Dec. 1991.

¹⁸⁴ State Senator Emilio Naranjo (D) also traces his ancestry to the Oñate colonizing party; cf. Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45. The volume of investment for the center is estimated to range between US \$ 1.5 million, cited in a photocopied leaflet for visitors of OMVC, and US \$ 3.3 million; cf. Nelson 29 Dec. 1991. State funds channeled into the project and criticized by state Republicans as "pork" amounted to US \$ 750,000; cf. Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45; Ensey Mar. 2002. For the statue alone, the cost that Rio Arriba County paid the artist is cited as between US \$ 105,000 (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45) and US \$ 108,000 (OMVC visitor information leaflet); cf. also Nelson 29 Dec. 1991; Hummels 17 Jan. 1998; Diaz 8 Jan. 1998; Trujillo 2005: 121. For Naranjo's long-time dominance in northern New Mexico politics cf. also Trujillo 2005: 121 n80.

silencing of oppositional interpretations at OMVC and challenged its effectiveness as a cultural institution.¹⁸⁵

In a short narrative history of the conquistador's enterprise, founding director and Latin American historian Robert McGeagh had outlined the official mission of the county-run institution as building identity through a sense of history: according to proponents of the project, OMVC provided an opportunity to relate the allegedly forgotten history of colonial New Mexico by 'honoring' don Juan de Oñate y Salazar as the conquistador and colonizer who furthered Columbus' "work of discovery" (McGeagh) in the upper Rio Grande region. With regard to a particular regional identity, the center was to commemorate the *encuentro* that gave life to "a syncretistic fusion, a new race, which still preserves its Hispanic language and culture, and forms part of a unique mosaic of ethnic pluralism in 20th century America" (McGeagh 1990: 6-7). With regard to northern New Mexico residents, OMVC was to stabilize Hispanic identity in a precarious region as well as offer a place to communicate the rootedness of ethnic identity by promoting the heritage and contribution of Hispanic citizens to the national past and present. Yet for Senator Emilio Naranjo and further proponents, localizing Oñate's epic of colonization at OMVC also took on further political implications. They instrumentalized the commemoration to underscore Hispanic primacy in the Southwest and thus to restrain Anglo claims to the region: "Oñate established the first Hispanic settlement in our state, in these United States, 22 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock ... I don't know why this has never been commemorated" (Naranjo qtd. in Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45).

The equestrian sculpture for OMVC in Alcalde, NM, completed in 1991, was dedicated together with the center in 1994. The monumental bronze equestrian by Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera presents the conquistador in the language of classic sculpture, modeled on Marcus Aurelius' heroic pose that emphasizes the determination and leadership of the

¹⁸⁵ Just before the *Cuartocentenario*, Director Estevan Arellano (Nov. 1997) still contended that OMVC had overcome its negative reputation as a pet project or a "pink [white] elephant." In response to the foot chopping, however, it was reinterpreted as a monument to Naranjo; cf. Calloway 8 Jan. 1998, D3. Opening hours (Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m.) also suggest a municipal office rather than a tourist-oriented institution. The effectiveness of the center was further called into question by an imminent threat of bankruptcy in 1998; cf. "Oñate Center" 6 Aug. 1998. To some critics, OMVC is an example for corruption in northern New Mexican politics: "The visitor center is rarely open, and its facilities are hardly used. Sitting next to the visitor center is a very expensive full size bronze statue of Oñate astride his faithful horse. [...] The cost of this rarely used 'white elephant' visitor center was enormous. [...] the New Mexico State Legislature with the urging of the Senate Pro Tem, Manny Aragon, in a deal for the support and vote of Senator Naranjo, gave the Oñate Center Project \$750,000.00. There is no telling how many Federal Taxpayer dollars [...] were put into the Oñate project" (Ensey Mar. 2000). In fall 2013, the center was converted into a Montessori School with an explicit outdoor learning component.

explorer and conqueror (Fig. 10).¹⁸⁶ He also took an illustration by the renowned painter and book illustrator José Cisneros of El Paso as a model for the sculpture (cf. Nelson 29 Dec. 1991).¹⁸⁷ The glorifying interpretation of Oñate's colonization that is manifest in the narrative expressed through Rivera's sculpture amounts to a monumental panegyric and is supported by historians like Marc Simmons who underscore Oñate's importance for New Mexico as a founding father figure.¹⁸⁸ In keeping with the heroic thrust of the monument project, Rivera also based his representation on the epic by Gaspar Perez de Villagr  (1610) that extols Oñate's virtues. To the artist as to other supporters of the monument project, thus paying due respect to "the father of New Mexico" (Rivera qtd. in Hummels 17 Jan. 1998: A2) and giving him "the credit he deserves" (qtd. in Diaz 22 Apr. 1998: A4) represented the adequate form of Oñate commemoration. Historiographically, Rivera's decision to authenticate his sculpture project through reference to Cisneros's illustrations and Simmons's Oñate biography move the design and intention towards a frontier perspective on the past. It remains indebted to historiographic paradigms like the 'famous men approach' of old Western history. The argument of an under- or misrepresented Hispanic history that informed the debates about

¹⁸⁶ New Mexico native and long-time El Pasoan Rivera has done numerous public sculptures for municipal and cultural institutions throughout the state and is also featured in private and museum collections. Public commissions include a large-scale grouping of bronze figures entitled *Journey's End* (2003) that commemorates the Santa Fe Trail, a major attraction on Santa Fe's Museum Hill, and the section of the Albuquerque project entitled *La Jornada* (in cooperation with Betty Sabo, 2005). By training as well as by interest Rivera's sculptural style owes much to the Western tradition exemplified by the art of Frederic Remington. Rivera's interest is in depicting "the rugged existence and heroism of those who tamed the great American West," as the Albuquerque Museum put it in a biographical sketch. Therefore, his interpretation of western history is rooted in a genuine fascination with opening up 'The West' and thus also draws on the popularized images of the frontier; cf. "Reynaldo Rivera"; Nelson 29 Dec. 1991. His work often aspires to the monumental, executed in a forceful realistic style designed to convey "a sense of life and movement."

¹⁸⁷ An early report on the statue that outlines the artist's vision and career cites Rivera's borrowing from "sketches by Jos  Cisneros of El Paso," an "authority on authentic historic figures on horseback"; Nelson 29 Dec. 1991. Cisneros's illustrations were selected for the title page of Simmons's Oñate biography (1991).

¹⁸⁸ Rivera's representation follows Marc Simmons's interpretation of Oñate as "the George Washington of the state" (Rivera 11 Jan. 1998; Flynn 10 Nov. 2003) who, as one reviewer observed, cast the conquistador as the "tragic hero of the New Mexico story" in his comprehensive biography. Although Rivera is aware of colonial mismanagement as well as of the Acoma uprising, in his sculptural renditions of the colonial past he remains intentionally silent on events that might detract from Oñate's glory. Simmons's historical portrait similarly maintains Oñate's greatness as a historic individual, to the extent of absolving Oñate from responsibility for the failure of his colonizing venture and blaming an 'inept collective' for the failures of their leadership: He cultivates the pro-Oñate bias when he argues that while the conquistador was singularly qualified for the task of colonizing and exploring northern New Spain owing to his and his family's frontier experiences and wealth (1991: 58, 60), he had to struggle with unfit "colonist material" (67-68, 105) who were frustrated, rebellious and ready to desert the enterprise after a series of intentional delays of the expedition on the side of colonial administration. Simmons thus downplays evidence for Oñate misjudging his ailing colonization project and ignores his increasingly authoritarian and vindictive attitude towards both Native Americans and colonists, excusing the misjudgement as resulting from a desperate attempt to produce positive results for the king of Spain; cf. De La Teja 1994: 636-37. Further exculpating the colonizer, Simmons even insinuates that Oñate had to contend with personal rivals and possibly conspiracy (60, 68).

Oñate commemoration around the year 1998 ignores that *Nuevomexicanos* are facing different challenges today in comparison to the anti-Hispanic and anti-Catholic sentiment that Bolton researched and quite successfully wrote against in his seminal work (cf. Hurtado 1995: 160-62; Trujillo 2005).¹⁸⁹ Rivera's strategy of persuasion resembles Houser's in the *XII Travelers* project for El Paso: Like Houser, Rivera emphasized that he researched the historical materials available for Oñate in order to arrive at a "truthful image" and he also resorted to an established antecedent in the regional arts scene with the illustration by Cisneros. New Mexico's (post-)quincentennial commemoration conveys a highly controversial view of the beginnings of European colonization. A bilingual bronze plaque on the concrete pedestal identifies the rider on his parading horse as "El Adelantado Don Juan de Oñate, Capitan General y Primer Gobernador de Nuevo Mexico / Captain General and First Governor of New Mexico, 1598-1610," acknowledging the legitimacy of his colonial enterprise and his achievement in the honorific, legal titles.

Media reports and commentary strikingly refrain from explicit conceptual or aesthetic critique of Rivera's work and approach by linking the sculpture to its classical model and by describing it as partaking in the established repertoire of commemorative forms. They present the statue's size, posture, gesture and facial features as an assemblage of canonical expressive elements indexing historical evidence rather than a *representation* of values like determination, fortitude and authority ascribed to the conquistador through this work of public art.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, they acknowledge Rivera's indebtedness to Villagra's epic *Historia* in his sculpture design, yet fail to qualify the source as a literary *representation*. To me, the emphasis of physical features makes the authors complicit with the artist's uncritical interpretation of the past. The hesitance on the part of the media to assume a critical perspective on the work itself by addressing the implications of *representing* historical evidence amounts to a failure to read representations as social facts and to a blindness toward the politics of public art. Rather than vaguely informing and reflecting "memorial concerns" on the cultural, temporal or spatial level, the aesthetics of the sculpture in combination with its location manifest the "monumental interests" that had informed the project. The artistic genealogy of the Oñate sculpture – classic Roman model, Villagra's epic, Remington's

¹⁸⁹ The notion of an Anglo bias in U.S. American historiography has been driving historical borderlands scholarship ever since Bolton (Ch. 1). The foil against which it unfolds is the complex mythology of the Black Legend. In the Oñate controversy, the Anglo bias-argument has been adopted mainly by Oñate promoters, as witnessed in statements by e.g. Naranjo and McGeagh who complained that conventional histories were giving "only passing mention to the pervading influence of [Spain] to this nation's past" (McGeagh 1990: 6).

¹⁹⁰ Descriptions of size range from a mere 'big' (Calloway 8 Jan. 1998) or 'huge' (Diaz 8 Jan. 1998) to a more subjective 'heroic' (Sharpe Dec. 1991) or 'majestic' (Nelson 29 Dec. 1991). As one of the few explicit critics, Loewen questions the sculpture's heroic pose and deplores the intentional downplaying of the historical implications and the symbolism of the statue as a piece of public art by apologists of the project (1999: 122).

tradition of Western art, Cisneros's illustration, Simmons's biography – is indicative of the layers of representations that accumulate in the sculpture design and, by implication, of the memories collected in the site of memory that is marked by the sculpture: the romanticizing imagery of the sculpture served to uncritically reproduce a conquistador cliché (Wilson 1997: 30). As a political statement, OMVC and the statue represent a glaring provocation that remained unacknowledged until the *Cuartocentenario*.

II.1 HISTORY OF PROTEST: RESORTING TO DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS OF POWER

In early January 1998, a letter reached the Albuquerque Journal Northern Bureau to inform the media of an act of destruction directed at the bronze sculpture at OMVC: In order to express its discontent with official commemoration during the *Cuartocentenario*, an anonymous group had resorted to a power tool and sawed off the equestrian's right boot and stirrup. The letter included a typed message as well as two photocopies that juxtapose an excerpt from an unidentified history relating Oñate's bloody punitive expedition against the Acoma and an editorial expressing unchecked enthusiasm about the *Cuartocentenario*. To underline the tension between historical evidence and present amnesia, the message read as follows:

We invite you to visit the Oñate Distortion Museum and Visitor Center located eight miles north of Española. We took the liberty of removing Oñate's right foot on behalf of our brothers and sisters of Acoma Pueblo. This was done in commemoration of his 400th year anniversary acknowledging his unasked for exploration of our land.¹⁹¹ [...] We will be melting his foot down and casting small medallions to be sold to those who are historically ignorant.¹⁹²

The following week, TV stations were approached with a second letter and a photograph of the severed foot accompanied by a declaration from the group that explained their action as motivated by the fact that "Oñate's atrocities at Acoma had left enduring scars" and that earlier attempts at exchange of opinions had been ignored.¹⁹³ The group members identified

¹⁹¹ The text of the note has been cited in different excerpts by different authors, with Diaz offering the most complete citation of the opening passage, confirmed and complemented by other reports as indicated; cf. Diaz 8 Jan. 1998: D3; Calloway 8 Jan. 1998: D1; Diaz 9 Jan. 1998: 1; Hummels 17 Jan. 1998; Rivera 11 Jan. 1998.

¹⁹² Calloway 8 Jan. 1998: D1; Diaz 8 Jan. 1998: D1; "Group" 14 Jan. 1998: 3.

¹⁹³ The second note was extensively paraphrased and partly quoted in a title story in the *Albuquerque Journal* (14 Jan. 1998). It mentions a visit "three years ago" and an attempt to vandalize the statue in the spring of 1997 which both went unnoticed. The authors express their frustration about the lack of communication: "No one attempted to talk to us or show us around. The brochure about Oñate said only to look at the positive aspects of his expedition. What about our culture, our way of life? His expedition destroyed it." They reminded readers of the historical facts of involuntary servitude brought about by the *encomienda* system that sent Indians to labor in mines, agriculture and construction for the Spanish colonials as well as of their own continued presence: "Had you looked at your beloved statue last spring you would have seen our effort. We have the patience of our coyote

themselves as “‘Native Americans and native New Mexicans’ who don’t buy into European culture.” They presented themselves as not interested in a divisive agenda, albeit very concerned about claims to both land titles and the historical truth:

We have no quarrel with our Hispanic brothers and sisters. There is neither racial motivation nor any attempt to disrupt any of our communities. This land was ours before the Conquistadors, Mexicans or Anglos came here. We know the history of this place before their time, and we have not forgotten it since their arrival. [...] We see no glory in celebrating Oñate’s fourth centennial, and we do not want our faces rubbed in it. If you must speak of his expedition, speak the truth in all its entirety. (qtd. in “Group” 14 Jan. 1998: 1)

The damage to the sculpture was discovered only after the press turned to OMVC officials for confirmation of the anonymous letter. In a first reaction on January 8, 1998, OMVC director Estevan Arellano expressed surprise at the destruction, excluded any probable link to local protesters and merely recalled “some criticism from people who opposed honoring Oñate” in 1992, after the statue was first erected (Diaz 8 Jan. 1998: D3). Yet he betrayed his own amnesia in the same report when he related that in 1994 people dressed as (Pueblo) clowns had awarded OMVC a plaque in the form of a shield decorated with small clay feet titled the “agony of defeat” and denouncing the center as “the most inappropriate use of taxpayers’ money ... to build the most incorrect monument possible” (D3). Herman Agoyo, then executive director of Eight Northern Pueblos Executive Council Inc., charged that the center amounted to “a representation of Indian culture without Indian representation” (“Indians Had No Say” 29 Dec. 1991: 1F). Failing to include consultation with Native American groups in the planning process had angered Pueblo groups more than Oñate’s ambivalent record. Commentators cited aggressive spray-paintings of other conquistador statues in the state, thus downsizing the singularity of the attack and suggesting a more active scene of protesters than official statements conceded.¹⁹⁴ It seems plausible that cutting off Oñate’s foot was not a singular incident but represented the climax of resistance to the monument project in Alcalde that began when the center was first planned, but that is otherwise rarely mentioned.

That the clandestine act of destruction had at first escaped official attention intrigued commentators and inspired imaginative accounts of the ‘crime scene,’ especially in out-of-state and national media. Yet the sensation they introduced to the case were rather geared to a national audience, catching attention by resorting to the clichés that still inform outside

brothers. We cut off his foot on the darkest, coldest night of the year”; cf. “Group” 14 Jan. 1998. Apart from suggesting a considerable Native American component in the protest, the second note highlights the central issue of land as well as continuity between past and present and the need for reconciliation that have become central arguments in controversies over the respective Oñate projects along the Rio Grande.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Rivera 11 Jan. 1998. For further instances of protest against OMVC, see Sharpe (Dec. 1991) who reported that a billboard advertising OMVC had been torn down. The billboard also achieved literary iconicity, serving as a ‘historic marker’ in Ana Castillo’s novel *So Far From God* (1993).

perceptions of New Mexico.¹⁹⁵ Despite the outcry over such negative publicity for the opening of the anniversary year, the destructive act provoked reflection on the past that also entered into the controversy about the projects in Albuquerque and El Paso and initiated an exchange of ideas through different media channels, from straightforward news reports on public discussion to numerous Letters to the Editor to various activist forums on the Internet. An editorial in the weekly *Santa Fe Reporter* praised the “act of inspired vandalism” as revealing the deeper historical implications of the *Cuartocentenario* and adding significance to the site of OMVC. The author invited further commentary from the “pranksters” who committed the publicity “stunt” (“Where’s the Foot” 26 Aug. – 1 Sep. 1998). The response came in time for Santa Fe Fiestas in early October. The text of the unsigned letter welcomed the enlightening effect that the vandalism had added to the anniversary year as a successful effort of breaking the silence over the Native American perspective:

New Mexico was poised for a grand celebration of the Cuartocentenario and we could not let that happen without voicing our existence. Outside of ‘Indian art’ and ‘gaming,’ we have become an invisible people, even to ourselves. [...] Many of our people have forgotten how to live. Our actions were to redirect the thinking of those who have forgotten us. There is no way to turn back the hands of time, but it is wrong to deny the truth of the past. (“Proud Actions”)¹⁹⁶

The third letter pointed to the legacy of conquest with regard to land policies, spirituality and contemporary identity politics and reminded New Mexicans of their common humanity and of the need for reconciliation instead of divisiveness. The marginalized and even suppressed critical voice manifest in the attack on the sculpture of January 1998 and in the subsequent confessor’s notes rather than the institution of OMVC or the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations in their authoritative tone, had effectively highlighted the predicament of history in a tri-cultural setting and eventually made Oñate – and the battle of Acoma – part of New Mexico’s collective memory.

The act of destruction propelled the Oñate sculpture at OMVC to national prominence and clearly exposed what Trujillo so aptly termed the “irreconcilable contradictions within the icon [that] poured out and could not be mastered” (2005: 119). The contradictions have

¹⁹⁵ James Brooke (9 Feb. 1998) imagined how “One moonless night in early January [...] an Indian [sic] commando group stealthily approached a bronze statue here of the first conquistador, Don Juan de Oñate” to saw off the foot and how “the news quickly traveled from this lowland [sic] reservoir of Spanish culture” to a “mesa, where cheers echoed among the adobe brick houses of Acoma Pueblo” upon its arrival. In a similar vein, Tina Griego (21 June 1998) rendered the profile of an observing and well-prepared vandal based, apparently, on an interview with OMVC director Estevan Arellano. The scene has also been imaginatively rendered by Kosek (2003: 347) and Trujillo (2005: 121) and used as an illustrative example in Seefeldt (2005: 169).

¹⁹⁶ The letter was edited for space and personal references and the editor also offered no guarantee for its authenticity; cf. “Proud Actions”; Trujillo 2005: 119 n78.

shaped the passionate controversies surrounding Oñate commemoration ever since.¹⁹⁷ Presented as a symbolic retribution for atrocities committed by the Spaniards at Acoma in 1598/1599, the act revealed the narrative communicated through the sculpture to be incomplete and biased. While ‘Oñate’s foot’ has become an icon and a trope of scholarship with regard to ethnic relations in New Mexico in its own right, the sensation caused by the ‘foot-chopping incident’ further reduced and distorted the story about the Southwestern past told through the site of the OMVC.¹⁹⁸ In its present form, Oñate commemoration continues to neglect the collective societal experiences and processes of cultural exchange that result from a prolonged situation of cultural encounter. It thus also disregards arguments championed by scholars working in the New Western History paradigm. The revisionist debate about New Mexican history vividly affirms recent scholarship in Borderlands and New Western History which emphasizes the challenges posed by accounting for inequities and injustices within a multicultural setting and the significance of acts of memory in such a complex situation.

Obliviousness to the symbolizing powers of public art and its significance in the definition of ethnic space becomes evident in the artist’s spontaneous decision to replace the foot. While the artist’s frustration about the damage done to his work seems genuine, his attitude unfortunately resembles the artistic egocentrism displayed by Houser in the project for El Paso: Rivera ignored the tension between a private perspective on the past and the collective interpretations of it that one might expect of historic representation in contemporary public space. Rivera’s immediate replacement of the foot could no longer contain the history of protest crystallizing at OMVC. His decision to the boot was widely deplored as a missed opportunity for an ongoing conversation about the past with visitors to OMVC and for breaking the silence about past interethnic relations in the region as a whole.¹⁹⁹ A missing foot on a heroic monument would have complicated the interpretation of the past and indicated the antithetical positions that constitute New Mexican memory. Yet Rivera condemned the act as

¹⁹⁷ cf. Wilson 1997: 30; Nelson 29 Dec. 1991; McGeagh 1990: 6; Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45; “Indians Had No Say” 29 Dec. 1991.

¹⁹⁸ “Oñate’s Foot” has inspired conferences, scholarly articles and dissertations as the paradigmatic example to describe interethnic predicaments; cf. Schröder and Hieb 2002; Dürr 2003; Teppers 2003; Kosek 2004; Seefeldt 2005; Trujillo 2005. For conferences cf. “Looking for Oñate’s Foot: Cultural/Chicano/Border Studies in the Nuevo Mexico Cuarto Centenario” (organized by Enrique Lamadrid and Tey Diana Rebolledo at UNM, 4-6 Feb. 1999), “Representing Common Destinies: History and the Construction of Community in the Southwest” (Ingo W. Schröder and Louis A. Hieb at UNM, 6-7 Nov. 1998), “Encounters: We Must Remember” (Museum for Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, 9 Aug. 1998); cf. DellaFlora 9 Aug. 1998. Loewen (1999) included “The Footloose Statue” in his popular guide to public historic sites in the United States; cf. also Schmidt 2001.

¹⁹⁹ Opinions split evenly over reattaching or leaving off the foot but Rivera could not bear to leave his creation damaged and had a replacement ready within two weeks; cf. Hummels 17 Jan. 1998: A1. Arellano also rejected suggestions to leave off the foot; cf. López 24 Apr. 1998. However, young readers opposed reattachment in Calloway (13 Jan. 1998: 1). An editorial in the *Santa Fe Reporter* (26 Aug. – 1 Sep. 1998) also favored a statue without the foot as did, of course, the reply from the anonymous group, cf. “Proud Actions.”

unnecessary and ineffective: “I think that whoever did it said what they were going to say, [...] I think it was a waste. I think they could have used their time more intelligently” (Hummels 17 Jan. 1998). While Rivera delighted that the replacement fit so well that “you shouldn’t be able to tell that anything was ever done to it” (Hummels 17 Jan. 1998: A1), the transformative power of the vandalism as an act of resistance to fabricating an impeccable historical record became evident in Arellano’s regrets that despite repairs “the statue won’t be the same” (Diaz 9 Jan. 1998: 1).

Despite an investigation by the Rio Arriba County police, no suspects have been publicly identified and it remains uncertain whether the damaging of the sculpture can be attributed to a particular activist group.²⁰⁰ After the damage, OMVC returned to relative quiet while the debate about Oñate began to rage throughout the state of New Mexico, prompted mainly, but not exclusively by *Cuartocentenario* events. The center again received some attention in 2003, when the sculpture was moved to the highway side of the center (Camino Real Magazine). With its relocation to the front of the center the historical figure has been promoted to higher visibility at the site, yet the story about the past that unfolds at and through OMVC has increasingly focused on contemporary issues of (ambivalent) identity and (contested) space.

As an act of publicity, the “foot-chopping” was singularly effective as it indirectly promoted both the site and its contentious subject matter – as well as the artist. As an act of historical commentary, the symbolic retaliation on Oñate revealed a shift in the sophistication of historical consciousness within the public that was not reciprocated by the perspective imparted through Rivera’s piece of public art. As an act of cultural resistance, the mutilation of the sculpture pointed to the responsibility of artists in a multicultural setting to listen to the silences and to refrain from lightly promoting a dominant version of the past in such a setting. On the whole, the vandalism emerges as a veritable act of deconstruction, effectively and permanently changing the narrative told through the site.

II.2 THE ONATE MONUMENT AND VISITOR CENTER AS USABLE SPACE

On the apparently most straightforward level, the Oñate center was promoted as an additional “roadside attraction” in the tourist landscape between Santa Fe and Taos, a destination for heritage tourism in a part of the ‘Land of Enchantment’ which visitors usually neglected. The official narrative situates the site of the first Hispanic colony in the larger spatial and temporal context of the United States. Reminiscent of the sites of San Juan, the first colonial settlement, and San Gabriel, first administrative capital for the new province of *La Nueva México*, the

²⁰⁰ Cf. Diaz 8 Jan. 1998; “Group” 14 Jan. 1998: 3; Griego 21 June 1998; Trujillo 2005: 121.

Oñate monument marks marginal northern New Mexico as the starting point for modern-day New Mexico. Commemorating Oñate in monumental fashion by dedicating a public statue to the colonial beginnings of New Mexico thus seemed in keeping with public interest as it would stimulate the flow of tourist dollars and thus benefit the local community – a rationale that is reminiscent of arguments raised in favor of the *XII Travelers* project in El Paso.²⁰¹ Yet the effectiveness of OMVC as a tourist destination and income generator was implicitly questioned not just by the initial oversight of the vandalism in early 1998 that belied the label of “roadside attraction,” but also by the almost cynical embrace of the Oñate controversy as publicity for the center.²⁰² In the year of the Columbus Quincentennial memorializing Juan de Oñate through OMVC had seemed an expedient measure to respond to economic, institutional as well as social and cultural concerns in northern New Mexico. Especially the economic arguments in favor of OMVC prevailed over criticism that blamed OMVC for its entanglement with political patronage in the county. The argument of economic stimulus, however, proved unrealistic and unconvincing. It was therefore argued that as a local cultural institution the Oñate center would impart educational and socio-cultural benefits to the community.²⁰³ The latter turned out to be the most resonating with local as well as statewide audiences, addressing questions of building identity and pride by imparting knowledge about the past and by preserving heritage. The initially positive reception of the Oñate center among a local public, artists, and activists was emphatically emphasized by director Estevan Arellano when he took stock of his first four years in office, on the eve of the *Cuartocentenario*:

In less than four years the Center has gone from a \$1.2 million pink elephant with locked doors to a place that is not only known locally but now also statewide, regionally, and even internationally [...] what we have accomplished so far is to extend the playing field from the sandlots of Rio Arriba to the national and international arenas when it comes to promoting the arts, culture, and history of the area. And this is only the beginning! (Arellano Nov. 1997)

Promoting OMVC as a place of and for *Hispanos* in northern New Mexico, Arellano emphasized the concept of ‘Hispanic heritage’ as a complex of arts, culture and history. While he adopted the widely shared sentiment of under-representation of Hispanic history in

²⁰¹ Sponsor and patrón Emilio Naranjo, former State Senator and Democratic County Chairman for Rio Arriba County, had promoted the monument on Highway 68 as an attraction that would “draw tourists curious about the origins of Hispanic America”; Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45.

²⁰² Already in 1991, Naranjo had welcomed the debate as a promotional tool for both the monument project and the reinstitutionalization of Oñate as an actor in New Mexico history; cf. Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45. Considering the coverage in national media and given the tight county budget that led to the state of New Mexico assuming fiscal responsibility for the center in August 1998, one must concur with Estevan Arellano that OMVC “never would have been able to buy publicity like that”; cf. “Oñate Monument” 6 Aug. 1998; “Where’s the Foot” 26 Aug. – 1 Sep. 1998.

²⁰³ Debbie Lopez, personal communication, 13 Oct. 2005.

comparison to Anglo American history, Arellano also hinted at the dilemma of establishing a counter-voice to the dominant discourse on the contested ground of Oñate commemoration, yet without explicitly acknowledging the inherent conflict of interest between the ethnic groups concerned:

What I'd like to see happen in 1998 would be a discussion of the history of New Mexico. I think the history of New Mexico has to be re-written, and it has to be written from the point of view, not of the Anglos, but of the Indo-Hispanos and the Native Americans, because we have never had any role in writing our history. (qtd. in López 24 Apr. 1998)

At OMVC, the official story of Oñate's beneficial colonization was to serve in constructing a new origin myth for present-day New Mexico. It would serve to lay the foundation for a regional historical consciousness capable of building Hispanic pride from the legacy of the colonial era and the appreciation of Hispanic achievement. The two official visitor guides for OMVC present the cornerstones of that origin myth in the two-fold mission pursued by the center and directed at different audiences: they both concentrate on the history of Oñate's journey and the spatial proximity of OMVC to the location of the first European settlement on U.S. soil, and they establish the theme of (historical) economic development through Oñate's expedition as the center's *raison d'être*.²⁰⁴ In its dual mission – researching the history of the *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* and creating awareness for the Hispanic heritage of the region – OMVC vied for both academic respectability and popular recognition. On the one hand, the power of historic evidence was summoned to offer comfortable closure to a glorious Hispanic past. On the other hand the inherently open concept of 'Hispanic heritage' served to encourage reinterpretation and (re)incorporation of that past into individual, present-day experience. Given comments such as Emilio Naranjo's, who regards Hispanic precedence as a major motivation for OMVC, it is safe to argue that both the center and its planning invoked the foundational acts of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown as historical as well as geographical reference points. At the same time, they are informed by a perspective that regards the land as a "largely unexplored region of the upper Rio Grande" (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45; McGeagh 1990), thus perpetuating the frontier image of civilization advancing against savagery and wilderness. Building ethnic pride through conquistador glory affirmed an accommodationist agenda that established the Hispanic minority as part of the European civilizing mission in the

²⁰⁴ "A Welcome From the Rio Arriba County Commissioners"; "Oñate Monument and Visitors Center"; the latter includes a brief Oñate history. While the leaflet issued by Rio Arriba County foregrounds the dedication to (scholarly) promotion of "*historical knowledge and research along the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* [...]" inaugurated by Don Juan de Oñate y Zalazar in [sic] January 6, 1598," the leaflet provided by OMVC gives precedence to an educational goal of the center that emphasizes "the *Hispanic heritage* of the Espanola Valley and Rio Arriba County" (emphases mine).

New World at the same time that it presented a counter-narrative to the history of Anglo American Westward movement, manifest in Northern New Mexico in the Santa Fe Trail.

II.3 FROM PLACELESSNESS TO LANDSCAPES OF HOME

Why was the anachronistic gesture of reverence towards Oñate initially so attractive to many *Nuevomexicanos*, and why was it so difficult to locate the site of OMVC on the commemorative map? Sociologist Felipe Gonzales identifies antithetical interpretations of Hispanic New Mexican identity that we can also trace in the debate between Oñate proponents and opponents: New Mexican Hispanic identity has (predominantly) split along lines of generation and class, as well as political orientation and historical experience. An accommodationist camp upholds ‘Spanish heritage,’ an identification that builds on the civilizing achievement of the conquistadors and leans toward Anglo perceptions of the Western past. It originates in the struggles for statehood of the first decades of the twentieth century, tries to claim status as a European (white) survival and is culturally implicated with Anglo constructions of tri-ethnicity. On the other hand, a protest-oriented identification emerged from the resistance to displacement, discrimination and prejudice after 1848 that proposes alter-nativity and reclaims the actual and symbolic terrain of New Mexico in the name of a dispossessed *mestizo* race (Gonzales 2007; Gonzales 1993; Trujillo 2005: 129). The site of OMVC emerges as a site of struggle over these articulations of New Mexican identity, communicated in the iconic image of Oñate as well as in its location in the contested terrain of the Rio Arriba. The complexity and the power of the foot-cutting become evident in the reactions to it from the accommodationist, pro-Oñate faction: Even though the accompanying notes present their act as a symbolic retaliation that refrains from a simplistic strategy of Oñate-bashing, Oñate proponents tried to contain the powerful protest in the framework of “recognition history” and tried to stifle criticism of Oñate as “political correctness.” However, rather than reiterating the shift from dominant to marginal discourses and recognizing victimization, the vandalism signaled agency originating in the spaces of northern New Mexico as a spatial frame for protest-oriented articulations of identity.

In their attempts at integrating the location of a mysterious “property crime” (Calloway 8 Jan. 1998: D3) in a meaningful spatial setting, newspaper reports struggle with the elusive character of northern New Mexican landscapes: While cautionary epithets such as the recurring phrase “in what is now New Mexico” (Sharpe Dec. 1991, Hummels 17 Jan. 1998) signal the authors’ awareness of the processes of spatial transformation, most commentators still remark on the placelessness of the present-day location. An impression of placelessness characterizes especially the early reports which subscribe to the frontier

paradigm of undefined, empty space when they vaguely anchor the site in “northern New Mexico” or refer to either Santa Fe or Española to define the present location of OMVC. An impression of transience characterizes descriptions that locate the center on “a five-acre tract *along* State Highway 68 *between* Santa Fe and Taos” (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45; emphases mine) or explain its establishment as occasioned by the commemoration of “Oñate’s *trip*” and “Columbus’s *visit* to America” (Nelson 29 Dec. 1991: 1F; emphases mine). While such characterizations indicate the commemorative objective of the center, they also suggest a tourist gaze on the site and the space constructed by it. After the “foot-chopping incident” of early 1998 (Brooke 9 Feb. 1998: A10), media reports primarily cast the site of OMVC in the historic and political terms of colonial Hispanic settlement, locating it “near the ruins of the state’s first capital, San Gabriel” (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45; cf. also Dejevsky 13 July 1998; Johnson “Message”; McGeagh 1990) or, topographically, “near the confluence of the Rio Grande and Rio Chama rivers” (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 46). Only in 1998 did Alcalde receive attention as a place in the dateline of most reports on the damaging of the sculpture.²⁰⁵ Interestingly, even the protest note that explains the act of aggression against the statue did not establish the center as a place in its own right but refers to it as the “Oñate Distortion Museum and Visitor center *eight miles north of* Española” (Diaz 8 Jan. 1998: D3; emphasis mine). Yet when James Brooke in his feature report cites the power of memory to defy placelessness, contending that “here in northern New Mexico, Indian, Hispanic and Anglo residents are discovering that below their bland, homogenized landscape of franchise motels and restaurants, ancient history is exerting a powerful, subterranean pull,” he suggests that the apparently non-descript spatial context of the monument site actually represents a storied land (9 Feb. 1998).

II.4 HISPANO HOMELAND

The Rio Arriba is exemplary for areas claimed through the cultural expressions of different ethnic groups as a symbolic frame of reference for particular identities. As contact between Hispanics and Native Americans was most consequential for both populations and their living spaces, the attempts to re-story northern New Mexico by reference to colonial history and thus use it for identity-building seem most evident. Apart from glorifying a controversial historic figure, however, commemorating Oñate in Alcalde also implies consecrating the strategies of emplacement applied by colonial Spaniards such as the codified appropriation of indigenous

²⁰⁵ Alcalde had first appeared in the dateline of a report by Diaz (8 Jan. 1998: D1) and later also in “Group” 14 Jan. 1998; Hummels 17 Jan. 1998. Brooke (9 Feb. 1998) cited Española, NM, in the dateline of his feature report. Calloway (8 Jan. 1998) spoke of a “roadside attraction north of Española.” His information reappeared in Loewen 1999: 119.

lands through *La Toma* or the occupation and renaming of Pueblo settlements. The highly dramatized act of *La Toma* had actually inaugurated a series of administrative and economic changes that effectively transformed the pre-colonial landscape from a Native American into a Spanish colonial space. At the same time that Spanish colonial policies legally appropriated and physically exploited the landscapes of the different Native American groups for the survival and prosperity of the new settlements, the pre-existing indigenous space with its network of settlements, irrigation techniques, established trade relations with northern Mexico as well as its cosmological dimension was declared void and rendered irrelevant on a symbolic level. Oñate appropriated Pueblo villages not just for the economic resources they offered, but to symbolically turn them into Spanish places by the apparently simple act of renaming. When Okeh Owingeh became San Juan de los Caballeros and Yuque Yunque San Gabriel, the names affirmatively inscribed a century of Spanish colonialism in the New World into the landscape of *La Nueva México*. Both secular and spiritual in character, the economic and administrative patterns of colonial Spanish settlement – *missiones*, *plazas*, *villas*, and *encomiendas* – literally re-placed the indigenous landscape.

A new repertoire of cultural forms resulted from ethnic mixing in a landscape newly defined by the strata of autochthonous Pueblo and imported Spanish colonial meanings, literally making space for often contradictory group identifications. In an intensive exchange and intermixing of cultural traditions, *mestizaje* has been widely acknowledged as the predominant process of Hispanic identity formation in the region. While it is locally also described as a *norteño* culture and heritage, connoting both northern New Mexico and the north of Mexico, some observers argue that a distinct *Hispano* culture has emerged from prolonged cultural exchange. The concept of a distinct ‘*Hispano* homeland’ has been most insistently upheld by cultural geographer Richard Nostrand. Building both on geographical and anthropological culture area concepts, he proposes *Hispano* distinctiveness as formative for a traditional culture area within the United States, traceable through specific landscape features such as topographic and place names, forms of land use and settlement patterns and demonstrable also through demographics, local cultural practice and shared historical experience. Positing the inextricable link between the land and people’s identity as its guiding principle, the idea of the *Hispano* homeland originated in the symbolic dimension that the Rio Arriba has assumed for Hispanic cultures.²⁰⁶ Without even replicating the exact site of the

²⁰⁶ The emphasis on rural folk culture and a pre-industrial bias tie Nostrand’s concept back to the Spanish Revival of the turn of the twentieth century; cf. Montgomery 2000: 492-95; esp. 494. Especially Nostrand’s reference to *mestizaje* evokes the concepts of Chicano identity and the mythic homeland of Aztlán formulated in resistance to dominant U.S. culture during the civil rights movement. At the same time, the idea of distinctiveness highlights the essentialist and static interpretation of regionalism that moves both *Hispano* and Chicano homelands close to ethnic nationalist articulations of culture and identity.

first colonial settlement – San Juan Pueblo/Okeh Owingeh a few miles to the south – the location of OMVC underscores the symbolic significance of northern New Mexico, and its interpretation as the historic heartland for a particular and discernible New Mexican Hispanic tradition and culture. The arguable notion of the *Hispano* homeland was affirmed by the decision to place the state’s official contribution to the Columbus Quincentennial in poverty-ridden Rio Arriba County, a county plagued by an image of political corruption and organized drug crime. In its official dedication to the affirmative commemoration of Spanish conquest in the Americas and to the integration of that experience into the national narrative, OMVC promotes the memory of colonial success and community-building as a counter-narrative to stories of dereliction and failure suffered by people and their political representatives in a minority-dominated county and region. Monumentally affirming the *Hispano* homeland through OMVC ascribed agency and cultural autonomy to a minority faced with social and cultural loss, which entails negative stereotyping and discrimination as its symbolic as well as actual consequences. Yet again, the feeling of emotional attachment to place must be characterized as inherently ambivalent as it both stabilized the affirmative *Hispano* homeland and informed the history of Chicano protest. When reading the Rio Arriba for its identificatory function as ‘homeland,’ the tension between the competing concepts of Hispanic identity in New Mexico that Gonzales approaches as accommodationist and “protest-oriented” becomes immediately visible. The silences entailed in the story told at OMVC make their way into public recognition through discourses of protest and traditions of activism that refer to nineteenth-century displacement and deprivation of New Mexican Hispanics and are similarly formative for the articulation of their identity. Despite the strong presence of affirmative readings, the tradition of protest justifies interpreting the Rio Arriba, an in many ways disenchanted part of New Mexico, as a landscape of resistance and the OMVC as a site that witnesses to the need for dialogue in commemoration.

Therefore, while officially commemorating the historic figure of Oñate at OMVC may have helped to put northern New Mexico on the collective mental map (again), it has also codified the confrontation of spatial narratives that had occurred in his renaming and thus seizing both the land and its inhabitants. From a spatial perspective, commemorating Oñate amounts to reinvigorating the first instance of colliding concepts of space in *Nueva*/New Mexico. The linear thrust of exploration and the system of villages strung along the *Camino Real* cut right into and across a land that Pueblo people imagine as conceptualized in concentric circles and as focused on those central places of emergence that were appropriated

by colonial settlements (cf. Ortiz 1969; Swentzell 1990: 27).²⁰⁷ In a play on Gonzales's title (2007), the history of Oñate's colonization hit the heart(land) of Pueblo culture. Placing OMVC within the cosmological compass of San Juan, the "mother village" for northern New Mexican Pueblos (Ortiz 1969: 3), therefore symbolically repeated the historic imposition of the landscape of Spanish colonialism on the landscape of Native Americans. The processes of ethnic and spatial mixing, however, were widely ignored.

The Oñate sculpture itself underscores the existence of competing concepts of space: In the sculpture's directionality, Rivera's design rendered the fundamental idea for the visitor center in material form, presenting the linearity of the colonial imagination of space. In addition to the art-historical connotations and aside from suggesting movement through space, the equestrian statue that was initially facing north re-traced the direction of Spanish colonial expansion. Since it was relocated to the 'front' of OMVC in 2003, the Oñate monument has been facing west, looking across the four-lane highway towards the Rio Grande and to the site of first capital of San Gabriel in the distance. Whether this reorientation towards westward movement intentionally transformed the last conquistador into a latter-day cowboy riding into the sunset and represents the culmination of an assimilationist perspective that incorporated the icon of Hispanic identity into the popular imagination of the Western past is a matter of conjecture. Yet if one wants to pursue such a reading, even the relocation indicates the issue of colonial expansion and spatial appropriation in invoking images associated with the 'opening of the West.' From such reading, a history of U.S. expansionism (and, by implication, territorial loss for Mexico) emerges, supported by reports that draw attention to significant events *not* commemorated in 1998, such as the Mexican American War, that nevertheless impacted strongly on the region (Brooke 9 Feb. 1998). Thus, the re-orientation of the Oñate sculpture redirects attention to the role that the United States have played in the processes of spatial dispossession of Hispanic New Mexicans since 1848. I argue that the controversy over the historic figure and its monumental commemoration is expressive of a deep-seated conflict over actual and symbolic ownership of the spaces of New Mexico. On the symbolic level, while the Spaniards were mapping a landscape of memory, the indigenous population not only was forced to integrate the Spanish presence into their established

²⁰⁷ The Tewa cosmology that informs the world view of most Pueblos in northern New Mexico is circumscribed by and reflected in a sequence of topographical markers reaching outward from the central plaza and the village itself to the fields and further to mesas and mountains ranges. Economic and cultural activities are focused on and organized around individual Pueblo settlements. Each village as well as many other material and intangible cultural expressions represent microcosms that contain the Pueblo world view forming centers/center places from which it unfolds (cf. Lipton 1990: 134; Swentzell 1990: 29). Movement within such space is imagined as cyclic or spiral, with a strong centripetal force, rather than linear and outward (Swentzell 1990: 26; 29). The cyclical imagination of space is paralleled in a similarly cyclical conception of time marked by eternal return rather than irrecoverable passing of ancient times; cf. Gutiérrez 1991: 7-8.

landscapes but early on began to construct a landscape of resistance. The symbolic and concrete processes of spatial dis/appropriation enduringly drive political activism in the state. This is also indicated in the view expressed in the anonymous protest note that challenged the official interpretation offered by OMVC: “This land was ours before the Conquistadors, Mexicans or Anglos came here. We know the history of this place before their time, and we have not forgotten it since their arrival.”²⁰⁸

III RE-DEFINING ‘HERITAGE’ AT OMVC: LANDSCAPES OF RESISTANCE AND REDEMPTION

In order to legitimize the project at the local level, the concepts and images connoting colonial expansion (colonial beginnings, *Camino Real*) were complemented by a conciliatory, stabilizing concept of ‘heritage’ arising from the specific local context of the site and designed to supply the ‘historic continuity’ in northern New Mexico often invoked in debates about the Oñate center. However, while visitor information material mentioned the legacy of agricultural transformation and hinted at the significance of Hispanic social organization in northern New Mexico, it provided no further examples to flesh out the concept of ‘heritage.’ The dedication of the Oñate center to its immediate surroundings and local context through a rather vague and open concept revealed the incongruities and contradictions of Hispanic history in New Mexico and of the controversial interpretation presented in the Oñate sculpture. In addition to the conspicuous absence of the Native American perspective and voice, the attempt to respond to assumed local concerns revealed a gap that was subsequently filled by demonstrating cultural persistence in the land of the ancestors against the odds of ongoing dispossession and injustice. Accordingly, while commemoration of the *Camino Real* and celebration of ‘Hispanic heritage’ constituted the official mission for OMVC, during the *Cuartocentenario* the center challenged the official practice of commemoration from a more local perspective. Deviating from the commemoration of the *Camino Real* as the nationally endorsed consensus model not only set the spatial record straight in terms of minority recognition and cultural identity, but also pointed to federal responsibilities with regard to legal redress and sustaining the social peace.

²⁰⁸ “Group” 14 Jan. 1998: 1; cf. also “Proud Actions.”

III.1 LANDSCAPE OF REDEMPTION: COMMEMORATING THE CAMINO REAL

With regard to spatial transformation, the Oñate center and statue mark the site of the first colonial settlement and administration, but as the Oñate controversy shows they are not the place of closure for the processes of social, economic and cultural displacement set in motion by Spanish colonization. The powerful presence of Oñate's history at OMVC has been utilized to make the colonial Hispanic experience part of national memory and to firmly place Alcalde on the collective mental map of the United States. Yet how could such claims to larger significance be translated to the local level? The official answer suggested tying the site of OMVC to another nationally endorsed narrative and spatial imaginary of (colonial) expansion: the *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro*. The royal highway had exploited and superseded pre-colonial trade routes between Pueblo country and Mesoamerica for Spanish colonizing ventures since the sixteenth century; selecting the image therefore not only replaces the symbolic significance of the Santa Fe Trail but also supports the temporal framework of colonial beginnings (Fig. 11). When the programmatic statements present it as “a vehicle of transporting culture, promoting trade and an artery of lifeline links between New Mexico (United States), Old Mexico and the European Community” (county pamphlet), they establish the cultural, historic and economic dimensions of the *Camino Real* in a national, even global perspective and attribute significance to a region characterized by (and advertised for) its marginality and remoteness – the Southwestern borderlands. As the *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* has recently become institutionalized as a National Historic Trail, the image legitimizes present Hispanic identities by reference to a point of glory in the authorized past of the nation. As a landscape feature, on the other hand, the trade route running south to north could also be instrumentalized to overwrite the dividing line of the international border as it evoked the historical relations within a culture area only recently interrupted by the artificial demarcation of national territories.

III.2 LANDSCAPE OF RESISTANCE: COMMEMORATING HISPANIC LAND GRANTS

The indeterminacy of the notion of heritage invited a redefinition of the site that conjured a host of events, images and continuities in many respects diametrically opposed to the center's official mission. It made room for the agenda of land grant activists dedicated to resolving the grievances of disinherited land grant heirs. Taking seriously the vital tie of land and identity in the Rio Arriba, *la querencia*, they gave memory work undertaken at the Oñate center a subversive slant.²⁰⁹ OMVC deviated from the statewide course of *Cuartocentenario* celebrations when it acknowledged the sesquicentennial of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). Given the contentiousness and the unsettled legal status of land grants in northern New Mexico, the silence over the land issue on the part of established politicians and the center's official mission may seem not surprising at first. However, it also ignored the actual consequences of real and symbolic acts of appropriation and the ambivalence implied in the notion of 'Hispanic identity.' While spatial dispossession had begun with *La Toma* of 1598 and primarily affected the indigenous Pueblo population, introducing 1848 as a moment of commemoration amounted to an indictment of U.S. policy after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. It called to mind the faulty and incomplete implementation of the Treaty and especially the failure to honor the legal protection granted Hispanics in articles VIII and IX. While on the national scale the breach of international treaty rights may have registered as a legal embarrassment, the consequences translated to serious economic disadvantaging and civic inequities most strongly felt on the local level. In the light of this chapter of New Mexican history, deviation from the statewide commemoration at the terminus of the *Camino Real* connected the Oñate center to a tradition of protest against spatial and cultural encroachment:

By the mid-1990s, and with the transition from foundational director McGeagh to first acting and operational director Arellano, the exclusive focus on Oñate commemoration at OMVC gave way to the memory work of land grant activists, powerfully introduced with reference to the spatial aspects of commemorating the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Land grant activists had carved out "a place to reassess the Land Grant Movement" at the Oñate center in Alcalde (Arellano 1996). The educational and cultural work at OMVC was expanded from its almost exclusive concern with colonial beginnings toward inclusion of the ongoing struggle for the preservation and restitution of property rights in (northern) New Mexico and the political commitment tied OMVC closer to the legacy of the Chicano

²⁰⁹ *La querencia*, the New Mexican expression for sense of place, refers to the intricate relationship between the land and its inhabitants and highlights the sensitivity to land issues in northern New Mexico.

movement in the region and the nation. Shifting the commemorative emphasis toward Anglo American conquest in 1848 and its contentious legacy built political pressure toward redress.²¹⁰

OMVC had initially been planned as a research facility for land grants, but it took sustained prodding from several land grant groups to eventually introduce legislation that designated the Oñate center on the county and national levels and established a “presidential commission to determine the validity of land claims in New Mexico ‘arising out of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 involving descendants of persons who were Mexican citizens at the time of the treaty’” with the “Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty Land Claims Act” (Rodriguez & Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997). The latter resulted in a federal GAO investigation into land grants (1999-2004) and in the inauguration of the comprehensive Oñate Center Land Grant Data Base Project in May 2002 (Ebright Jan. 2003).²¹¹ Substantial funding was to be allocated to the center in order to publicize and make available the historical information on land titles for the respective communities. As a nationally endorsed study center and archive OMVC could more effectively support land grant heirs in substantiating their claims before a federal commission that reviewed the adjudication process after 1848.²¹² The demands on the institution were outlined by its director and the team of researchers compiling a database for 250 land grants: “All of the archival material needs to be collected in one central location and resource people made available so that grants and acequia associations are able to do the historical research necessary to underwrite their claims” (Arellano qtd. in Schiller Feb.

²¹⁰ Cf. Arellano in Rodriguez and Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997; Arellano Nov. 1997. Arellano and his successor have been indirectly or directly involved in the land rights movement. Arellano’s legal focus is on common lands turned over to federal or state governments as public forest lands; cf. Rodriguez & Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997. Arellano’s activism as a cultural organizer and writer is motivated by his formative political and cultural experience at the *Academia de la Nueva Raza*, a Chicano cultural think tank of the 1970s; cf. Arellano Nov. 1997. His successor in office, Norman Martinez, is involved with the land grant database (Ebright Jan. 2003; Matthews Sept. 2003). Yet their roots and ongoing involvement in social and political activism in the Rio Arriba may also have contributed to the reluctance of administrators and public to wholly embrace the Oñate center. Both Arellano and Martinez left office for reasons not fully revealed, assumably political, as suggested by Debbie Lopez.

²¹¹ The differentiated, searchable database lists individual and community lands granted *Hispanos* and Native Americans in seven categories. Apart from the statistical information of grant date, location and size, as well as grant type and successive officers/owners, each entry comprises scans and translations of the original grant documents, a summary of the history of the grant, and reference to related information. Eventually it is planned to also provide maps with each listing; cf. Matthews Sep. 2003; “Rio Arriba County” Dec. 2003; Matthews Mar. 2004; Ebright Jan. 2003; Neary 15 May 2005.

²¹² In face of ongoing disputes over lands granted by Spain and Mexico and expropriated through unethical practices in the adjudication process by land barons, lawyers or the government, a presidential commission was called for in order to determine the validity of land claims in New Mexico “arising out of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 involving descendants of persons who were Mexican citizens at the time of the treaty.” The institution to coordinate claimants’ concerns and issues of research would be a land grants study center hosted at OMVC. Cf. Arellano Nov. 1997; Rodriguez and Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997; Schiller Feb. 1997; “The Oñate Center Celebrates” Feb. 1998.

1997).²¹³ The legal implications of the location take us again to the actual historic and symbolic situatedness of the Oñate center: The allegedly neutral ground of federal lands upon which the county had placed its contribution to the national commemoration of Columbus's landfall emerged as a legal quicksand that conjured the other side of colonial appropriation, the often violent, mostly unsanctioned superimposition of one spatial imagination onto another.

In addition to the archival purpose, in 1995 the Rio Arriba County Commission had already adopted a resolution asking for an annual commemoration of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at OMVC (Arellano Nov. 1997). The center has retained the anniversary of the Treaty as a central annual event that offers a stage to perform *Nuevomexicano* identity as well as a platform to lobby for land grant issues. Yet the land grant project remains vulnerable to the vagaries of identity politics in Rio Arriba County, with more inclusive definitions of identity resting on *mestizaje* competing against exclusive visions that, like in the controversy over the Oñate projects in El Paso and Albuquerque, claim conquistador ancestry.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, in the year of the *Cuartocentenario*, when all over New Mexico Oñate rode again along his *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro*, the Oñate center at the end of the road celebrated the 150th anniversary of the end of the Mexican American War with music, dance, and poetry as well as with international conferences on the Treaty, the *Camino Real* and future management of the land.²¹⁵ In one of the intriguing bylines of commemorative coincidence, at the "other end" of Oñate's *Camino Real* on U.S. soil in El Paso, Chamizal National Memorial hosted the first public exhibition on the Treaty as a commemoration of a singularly pivotal moment in the historical relations of the neighboring nations in the year of the *Cuartocentenario*.²¹⁶

²¹³ Schiller reports the sum total of one million dollars, yet later reports break it down to annual allocations of 200,000 dollars; cf. "Rio Arriba County" Dec. 2003; Matthews Sep. 2003; Schiller Feb. 1997.

²¹⁴ Mark Schiller, Mar. 2006, personal correspondence.

²¹⁵ Cf. "Oñate Center Schedule" Jan. 1998. The full scope of activities is reported by *La Jicarita News* as including songs and ballads, oral history, a play entitled "Tierra Sagrada," as well as panel discussions addressing land grant concerns such as the possibilities of legal redress, co-management of grant lands with federal agencies or conflict over land management with environmentalist groups as well as developers, and calls to political alertness and concerted efforts; cf. "The Oñate Center Celebrates" Feb. 1998. Cultural fairs and symposia on the Treaty as well as the Camino Real became characteristic for the anniversary, presenting the state of land grant scholarship or premiering new art in exhibits or performances like Monica Ortega's *corrido* to Oñate in 2003. Also, the anniversary was occasionally held at the State Capitol in Santa Fe (1999, 2000, 2004) using the opportunity to lobby for e.g. a State Land Grant Department (1999) or to publicly assess progress toward redress (2000, 2003, 2004). Cf. "February 2" Mar. 1999; "Land Grant Forum Celebrates" Mar. 2000; Matthews Mar. 2003; "Treaty of Guadalupe" Jan. 2004; Matthews Mar. 2004.

²¹⁶ Like at OMVC, public celebrations, symposia, and international and interagency cooperation characterized the work of National Park Service public historians; cf. Gómez 1998.

IV SEARCHING FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE PAST: AUTHENTICITY AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE OÑATE CUARTOCENTENARIO

Authenticity and ambivalence recur as central notions in the debate about Oñate commemoration, highlighting the predicament of coming to terms with the ambivalences of a multicultural past. When enlisted for purposes of building and defending Hispanic identity locally and nationally, the symbolic dimension of the monument site provided an empowering link between past and present that neither proponents nor opponents were willing to grant the respective other side. Therefore, it became important to determine which side was in possession of the ‘historical truth,’ and the latter was sought in an ‘authentic’ representation. Authenticity thus became a key term not just for Rivera’s rendition of Oñate as ‘the last conquistador’ but also for the educational and identity-building purposes of OMVC.

The notion of authenticity not only informs the selection of past events to remember and the kind of connection constructed to anchor the present in the respective past but also extends to attitudes towards the past. Notably, it is on the level of individual experience and social practice that the categorial abstraction becomes malleable: For Oñate proponents, representations were considered authentic if they displayed a reverential commitment to Oñate’s role and legacy for contemporary New Mexico. They invoked the concept of authenticity in order to stabilize the link between past and present to the extent of freezing it in time, eventually to make it immune to contemporary critique. For critics of Oñate commemoration, on the other hand, authenticity was to be found in representations that acknowledged the suffering of subjugated people and respected their cultural persistence in the face of adversity. The preconceptions drove both research into the subject matter and subsequent recognition of ‘Hispanic contributions’ to the national past. I have identified strategies of legitimization that especially Oñate supporters employ to connect past events to present concerns and thus to lend the sculpture project as well as *Cuartocentenario* celebrations authority. Recurring arguments in the debate over Oñate can be summarized and categorized under four labels: authenticity qua precedence, qua descent, qua evidence, and authentication qua replication.

IV.1.1 HISPANIC PRECEDENCE

When Oñate commemoration was employed for the purpose of building identity through education, the strategy of choice in claiming authenticity aimed at Hispanic precedence and focused on Spanish colonial beginnings to the exclusion of pre-Spanish, Native American settlement and culture. The educational task provided national significance for a regional project and consequently the statue as well as OMVC, and the anniversary celebrations foregrounded the role of the founder(s). In the light of demographic changes that show Hispanics as becoming the largest minority population in the United States (Guzman 2001), a locally specific historic tale was made nationally meaningful in order to strengthen awareness of the history of diversity in the nation. Adding to the culture historical connotations inherent in Naranjo's motivation for proposing the Oñate center, the uncomfortable relationship between Hispanic New Mexicans and the nation state was accentuated by Arellano who remarked with regard to Hispanic precedence: "We didn't come to the United States. We've been here for almost 400 years [...] yet society calls us immigrants" (Rodriguez & Gonzales 31 Jan. 1997). As a counterpoint to xenophobic prejudice, the notion of Spanish precedence aimed at improving the appreciation of different cultural traditions among the youth of northern New Mexico. Building consciousness and historical awareness on the local level in celebratory, monumental fashion, it was argued, would alleviate some of the pressing problems of the region such as low self-esteem leading to economic failure and high crime rates or population loss owing to high outmigration to urban centers (Debbie Lopez, personal communication).

Yet despite an emphasis on the events that resulted in the independent founding of the Spanish colony – arrival and encounter, official appropriation of the territory and establishment of a capital – Oñate commemoration was measured against the English beginnings at Jamestown or Plymouth Plantation. The attitude was poignantly revealed in the Governor's official statement which introduced the *Cuartocentenario* as a commemoration of the "first permanent Spanish settlement in the United States, predating the English colony of Jamestown in 1607 by nine years" (Johnson, "Message"). Yet highlighting the "firsts" of the foundational act – such as the first capital, the first governor, first militia, first theatrical play, first Thanksgiving – confirmed Anglo American history as the norm and primary frame of reference for any historical narrative pertinent to U.S. territory.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Comparison with Anglo American settlement is also found in Nelson 29 Dec. 1991; Sharpe Dec. 1991; Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998; Dejevsky 13 July 1998.

Spanish precedence in the face of colonial competition – framed in the geographically confused quip that “[I]f the Pilgrim Fathers had arrived in New Mexico, rather than Jamestown[sic], they could have gone shopping” (Dejevsky 13 July 1998) – constituted a fundamental motivation for commemorating Oñate as eminent New Western historian Patricia N. Limerick pointed out in an interview: “You want to put the spotlight on the moment when your people look the most successful, enterprising and triumphant. After so many years of celebrating Plymouth Rock, the Puritans and Jamestown, all this genuflecting at the shrine of English North America must get a little wearing if you are a New Mexican Hispanic” (qtd. in Brooke 9 Feb. 1998). Limerick’s assessment of the modern-day reflection of colonial competition was confirmed by Arellano who ironically remarked that “When we go to school, we are told that our ancestors came from the East. Well, I don’t know of many Martinezes, Arellanos or Archuletas who had any ancestors who landed at Plymouth Rock” (qtd. in López 24 Apr. 1998).

IV.1.2 ANCESTRAL TIES

With his reference to ancestral relations, Arellano introduces a second strategy of authentication to the project’s purpose of building identity. Authenticity qua descent asserts historical continuity through consanguinity, lending authority to individual historical interpretation by actual or constructed family ties to the first settlers. In the debate, many Hispanic Oñate proponents defended their position with their ancestral relation to the so-called *primeros pobladores*. They claimed a common voice that derived its authority from a shared experience of peoplehood initiated by the first colonists. When Oñate is referred to as the ‘father of New Mexico,’ the designation likewise connotes descent and familial ties. Rivera took these ties literally and declared that including a Spanish descendant of Oñate as inspiration for the sculpture design made the piece more authentic. The importance attributed to ancestral links to the past is also witnessed in the designation of OMVC as a destination for heritage tourism and its catering to the activities of genealogical societies. Family lines of the first colonists have been variously reconstructed, despite the difficulty that many documents were lost during the years of the Pueblo Revolt between 1680 and 1692.

The notion of ancestral relations – or blood ties – sets Hispanics apart from other minorities and the majority population in New Mexico as well as from other Hispanic populations within the United States. While claiming authenticity qua descent strives for an unbroken link to the foundational moment and act, it ignores the changes wrought by centuries of intercultural contact, and the result of such a process, *mestizaje*. The definition of Self that Oñate supporters promoted rests on exclusion of the Other. The controversy about

the conquistador has revealed the inadequacy of such a position in a state that proclaims its tri-ethnicity and perceives itself as transcending the majority-minority divide. As will be elaborated in greater detail below, the bilingual plaque on the sculpture's pedestal only inadequately represents the interethnic situation in New Mexico. It accentuates the competition between Hispanic and Anglo versions of history and affirms ethnic boundaries in constructing identity rather than reflecting equity in historical representation or challenging the pattern of binary oppositions.

IV.1.3 HISTORIC EVIDENCE

Hispanic primacy on the land and familial ties to the times of colonial beginnings that informed identity building on a personal level were supported in the debate by a third strategy which invoked historical evidence to claim authenticity for the purposes of building identity also for a collective, to be backed by scholarly objectivity. The reasoning rests on the undisputable fact of Oñate's arrival in New Mexico and on the perceptible transformations set in motion by his act of colonization. Most early reports on and arguments in favor of the project rely on a canon of received historical data, such as route, dates, and number of settlers, thus contributing to building and creating a popular chronology and statistics for the history of Oñate's colonization.²¹⁸

Simmons's comprehensive popular Oñate biography represents an elucidating example of an interested piece of historical scholarship. His summary of the heroic founder's legacy matches Oñate proponents' attitude towards the Hispanic past and makes him their historiographical authority: "In what is now the Western United States, [Oñate] was the founder of the livestock industry, the mining industry, and he opened the first major road, the Camino Real [...] He brought Christianity and Western culture" (Brooke 9 Feb. 1998). Simmons enumerates the manifold transformations of the New Mexican landscape as evidence of civilizational progress, ranging from agriculture – introduction of apple, peach and plum orchards, adoption of ranching and irrigation techniques – to mining, trade routes and to the ideological transformations brought about by the Franciscan missionary system. Additionally, he considered the profound changes wrought on the land as inevitable and fundamentally beneficial. Simmons's historical vision is exemplary for many Oñate supporters. His perspective on the past emerges as profoundly event-oriented, it subscribes to

²¹⁸ Some reports even took this strategy one step further when they pretended to refer directly to contemporaneous sources such as Villagra's epic or correspondence from the colonies to affirm this store of historic knowledge. Cf. Nelson 29 Dec. 1991: 1F; Sharpe Dec. 1991.

the notion of Manifest Destiny and is informed by a Turnerian frontier paradigm.²¹⁹ Furthermore, building on Turner's frontier hypothesis Simmons subsumed and thus "Americanized" the historical experience of a (Hispanic) minority under the terms and parameters of the national narrative about Western history. Casting Oñate as the pioneering individual who 'tamed the land' depicts colonial Hispanic New Mexico as a settler society preceding nineteenth-century Anglo settlement and society. Project proponents took up Simmons' cue when they claimed Oñate as their heroic role model to affirm a continuous Hispanic tradition in the Southwest, built on intrepid exploration and the promise of 'progress.' Citing the Hispanic contributions to regional, state, and national history and society, they claimed participation in the narrative of 'American' history. Commemorating Oñate in this way not only denied the right of pre-existing societies to register their cultural achievements in forming and 'civilizing' the land, but it also distorted the historical vision, as the *Nueva Mexico* that Oñate colonized was by no means "largely unexplored" but inhabited and cultivated as well as 'storied' through a long tradition of settlement and earlier Spanish explorations when Oñate made his *entrada* in 1598.

Feminist historian Antonia I. Castaneda reminds us that incorporating a minority's lived experience into the established abstractions of American historiography can only constitute a first step towards expanding the canon of historical knowledge and thence building a particular identity. It necessarily precedes the scrutiny of constructions of the Other within the "larger fabric of national as well as global economic, social, political, and cultural issues" (Castaneda 2001). Rivera's sculpture for OMVC deliberately omitted the indictment Oñate faced as a result of the atrocities he committed, keeping silent on his eviction from the colonies and loss of the coveted titles. Similarly, in their eagerness to add significant aspects of forgotten Hispanic history to the record of U.S. history, Oñate proponents fell victim to historical amnesia when they privileged a heroic tale of conquest that kept silent about the conquered native peoples. Monument supporters' striving for 'historical accuracy' ignored the artifactual character of historical research that selects and arranges the store of historic information with regard to the interests and preconceptions of the researcher. Citing historic evidence and scholarly arguments they aspired to objectivity, but disregarded the extant lineages of historical research. Therefore, in the search for allegory and iconic figures that would serve to construct a usable past, fixed in the times of history and thus dissociated from

²¹⁹ Simmons reveals his indebtedness to Turner when he extolls Oñate's individual pioneer spirit: "He laid the foundations for what became this state through sheer force of will and power"; qtd. in Griego 21 June 1998. This also delimits the pioneer legacy that artist Rivera expressed in his sculpture; cf. Diaz 22 Apr. 1998.

current social issues, preexisting assumptions and research agendas remained unacknowledged and unexplained.²²⁰

IV.1.4 SYMBOLIC REPLICATION

Derived from the recourses to historiographic authority is the fourth strategy of authentication qua replication. It was the central strategy during the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations, legitimizing large-scale reenactments of the expedition and replication of period material culture items. In spectacular inscenations of the historical events, Oñate rode up the Rio Grande again presenting and parading period costumes and weaponry as well as reenacting key scenes like *La Toma* or the founding of Spanish settlements. In their quasi-typological approach to history, the performances could draw on a rich tradition of Fiestas and folk dramas in New Mexico that were themselves dedicated to replication, sustaining and often also inventing the memory of key events: The folk drama *Moros y Cristianos*, for example, stages the confrontation of cultures modeled on the reconquest of Spain from the Moors; the Santa Fe Fiestas commemorate Diego de Vargas's 'peaceful reencounter' with Pueblo leaders after the Pueblo Revolt in 1692, conveniently forgetting about the violent reconquest that ensued.

Reenacting Oñate's *entrada* had already been an important component of New Mexico's commemorative activities for the Columbus Quincentennial of 1992.²²¹ Consequently, the Oñate sculpture at OMVC was also conceived in the commemorative disposition of the Columbus Quincentennial which conservative Hispanic groups in New Mexico embraced as the 'Year of the Hispanic' (cf. Santillanes "La Hispanidad"). Yet the *Cuartocentenario*, apart from providing attractive entertainment for the local population and tourists alike, aimed at creating enduring visibility for Hispanic history and culture. It could rely on a tested pattern of festivals and performances, exhibits and lecture formats to visibly recreate the Hispanic past, adding commentary to its dramatization through speeches, symposia and anniversary projects like museums and cultural centers.²²² As Tina Griego

²²⁰ With the *Cuartocentenario*, the "established facts" were increasingly woven into the argument of the respective articles and must be analyzed more carefully with respect to the authorities they refer to. Brooke and Salazar appear to rely on Simmons's interpretation, while Encinias and Linthicum make reference to the original sources compiled by Hammond and Rey (1953), and Ortiz and Governor Johnson convey an official interpretation that minimizes controversial topics by reducing Oñate's colonization to the route taken by the colonists; cf. Brooke 9 Feb. 1998; Salazar 4-5 Mar. 1998; Encinias 21 June 1998; Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998; Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998; Johnson "Message"; Hummels 17 Jan. 1998.

²²¹ For the schedules of 1992 cf. Bureau of Land Management "A Meeting of Two Worlds"; Hispanic Culture Foundation "New Mexico Quincentennial Calendar."

²²² A Camino Real museum in Socorro as well as the National Hispanic Culture Center in Albuquerque were dedicated during the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations; furthermore, the anniversary occasioned a lecture series at

pointed out, approximately 200 events commemorated the beginning of Spanish colonization throughout New Mexico, the majority reenacting events that established the respective locations as part of the larger colonization epic of the Rio Grande. Newsletters, brochures and program fliers put out for the *Cuartocentenario* by the state of New Mexico, by cultural organizations and by individual communities advertised a mosaic of community events patterned on or complementing the official celebration, as in the exhibits of period culture at *El Rancho de las Golondrinas*, pageants like the adaptation of Michael Encinias's historical novel *Two Lives for Oñate*, or reenactments like the First Thanksgiving in El Paso as well as parades in period costumes throughout the state following the historical route of the *Camino Real*. Notwithstanding considerable scholarly reflection, the historical spectacles overwhelmingly reenacted rather than reflected upon the conquest of 1598, extending reenactment even to the official representatives and to an attitude of indifference toward Native objection.²²³

The official *Cuartocentenario* celebrations presented a glorious interpretation of New Mexico's past without providing much room for dissenting voices. The year was entirely dedicated to the significant events of Oñate's *entrada*, culminating around April 30 as the date of *La Toma* and the ensuing founding dates for settlements like San Juan. For many people involved with the *Cuartocentenario* of 1998, four hundred years of New Mexico could be made synonymous with four hundred years of the *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro*. Oñate's route served as a convenient organizing principle to coordinate and align anniversary celebrations throughout the state and as far south as El Paso, TX. Participants in the official ceremonies could even physically retrace the *entrada*, traversing the commemorative terrain along the Rio Grande from the First Thanksgiving in El Paso to the dedication and ground breaking ceremonies for the Camino Real Museum in Socorro and the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. While the *Cuartocentenario* did provoke criticism for its one-dimensional historical perspective and prompted resistance to symbolic reconquest comparable to the protests voiced by indigenous people throughout the Americas in response to the Columbus Quincentennial, the reliance on the highly paradoxical spectacle of

the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe and several conferences; cf. Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998; Brooke 3 May 1998: 2A; Soto 28 Apr. 1998; Baldauf 27 May 1998. See also n218.

²²³ At the official celebration in Santa Fe in late April 1998, Spanish Vice-President Alvarez-Cascos assumed a vital role in the re-encounter of the former colonial power with its ex-colony. Exchanging gifts and presenting banners were central aspects of the commemoration. The central event in Santa Fe attempted a reconciliatory gesture toward the Pueblo and local festivities staged the 'encounter' as a predominantly peaceful affair, as witnessed in the theme for Socorro's three-day anniversary event, *Oñate's Entrada Tranquila*. Cf. Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998; Brooke 3 May 1998.

reenactment commemorating the creation of a new social and political entity remained a most striking (and puzzling) feature of the anniversary celebration.²²⁴

The *Cuartocentenario* culminated in the official act of state in Santa Fe on April 26-27, 1998, which highlighted military and religious aspects of conquest. Following a reenactment of the *entrada* by a special operations group of the Spanish military in period uniforms, a replica of Oñate's banner was presented to the state of New Mexico on Santa Fe Plaza that represented the spiritual and political protectors of the colonization in its depiction of Mary, Virgin of Remedies, and the coat of arms for King Philip II of Spain. When it was passed on from the Spanish Vice-President and Spanish military in colonial costume to the Governor and eventually to the *Caballeros de Vargas*, a group dedicated to the preservation of Hispanic traditions in the Santa Fe Fiestas and guardians of a statue of the Virgin Mary, it was in fact symbolically 'passed through time' and through the different institutions of power. Afterwards, a solemn procession moved from the plaza to St. Francis Cathedral where a high mass was read that also included veneration of *Nuestra Senora de La Paz*, formerly known as *La Conquistadora*.²²⁵ Especially this latter invocation of the Catholic presence in North America highlights the euphemistic disguise of colonial appropriations of space and topography in terminology that replaced 'conquest' with 'pacification.' While religious overtones characterized this part of the celebration, the military aspect was emphasized in the reenacted march, but also through the unveiling of yet another Oñate sculpture at the National Guard headquarters, presented as commemorating the establishment of the militia concept on U.S. soil. Concluding the ceremonies with a reenactment of the First Thanksgiving at *El Rancho de las Golondrinas*, a living history museum near Santa Fe, again presenting period costumes as well as music and dishes, the commemorative events displayed a remarkably closed conception with regard to the historical theme that nevertheless was also remarkably disregarding of other than celebratory concerns in the anniversary.

Encounter figured only marginally in the official commemoration. Despite the inclusion of traditional folk drama, dance and music in individual community celebrations and

²²⁴ Chicano columnists Rodriguez & Gonzales pointed out: "This conflict is virtually a replay of the Columbus Quincentennial controversy of 1992. While some want to honor the memory of conquistadores [...] indigenous people are repulsed at having to honor those who brought death, destruction, and slavery. As with the Columbus controversy, the voices of mestizos are virtually ignored. It is these voices that have surged forward to state that to have an exclusionary celebration is to ignore and negate their existence"; Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998. Cf. also Gonzales & Rodriguez 13 Oct. 2000. In response to protest against the Columbus Year, the United Nations had dedicated 1993 as the Year of the Indigenous Peoples and proclaimed a decade of indigenous peoples (1995-2004).

²²⁵ The text read for High Mass was Colossians 3, 12-17. Starting with a reminder of exceptionalism and continuing to exhort efforts towards peaceful coexistence through forgiveness and reconciliation, the text strongly resonates with fundamental tenets of American civil religion.

although the concomitant lecture series, exhibits and educational programs and the dedication of cultural and historical centers throughout the state promoted a differentiated perspective on the past, the statement expressed by the official *Cuartocentenario* events dealt in silencing the memories of the Other, which was understood by many as a reenactment of conquest. As much as the replication of material culture, the reenactment of the *entrada* along the *Camino Real* or of the First Thanksgiving, or the procession from *plaza* to church speak of a rich legacy of faith and tradition in the region, they also perpetuate the superimposition of civic and religious topographies begun with Oñate's act of conquest in 1598.²²⁶ The so-called "ceremony of re-encounter" between Pueblo representatives and a Spanish delegation at San Juan that was designed to "redefine the relationship between the Indian people and the Spanish in order to lay aside some of the grievances of the past" (Rolwing 14 Feb. 1998)²²⁷ had merely formed the prelude to the grandiose celebration of Hispanic tradition and pride in the 'tri-ethnic' state. Outside of feature articles, few commentators cared to include Native American perspectives on the past in their reports, even though that might have revealed more consensus than anticipated along a spectrum of opinion reaching from rejection of politically inconsequential gestures of symbolic reconciliation to acceptance of the integral role of Spanish tradition in contemporary Pueblo realities.²²⁸

²²⁶ The statue unveiled represented a banner-bearing Oñate on foot by Scott McCormick that according to Diaz's report "draws no ire" (22 Apr. 1998). Although it was also funded through the art in public places-program, it has not been included in the case studies because it is somewhat removed from public attention by virtue of being installed on military ground. There also was no evidence of controversy over its design and installation to be found in the archives consulted; cf. Diaz . For further summaries of the official celebrations cf. Soto 28 Apr. 1998; Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998; the celebration was critically contextualized in Griego 21 June 1998.

²²⁷ Re-encounter at San Juan was a daring gesture to suggest. Yet in contrast to the original conquest, in 1998 Native Americans had a choice, and while most Pueblo leaders decided to take a pragmatic approach and interpret the meeting with representatives of the Spanish government as an acknowledgement of cultural blending, Acoma boycotted the symbolic closing of the record of colonial atrocities that would remain without any true political effects on the relations between the Pueblo and Spain; cf. Griego 21 June 1998; Baldauf 27 May 1998.

²²⁸ In a comprehensive report on the *Cuartocentenario*, Griego (21 June 1998) rendered the reactions of different Pueblo leaders to a resolution from Acoma that rejected the "ceremony of re-encounter" and challenged the celebration as an attempt of closing the historical record and shirking responsibility for the consequences of violent confrontation. Perspectives on the past ranged from skepticism ("Why should we help celebrate the conquest of a people when those people are us?" Pojoaque Gov. Jacob Viarrial quoting a former governor) over accommodation in a shared history of suffering (Benny Atencio of Santo Domingo Pueblo) to persistence in the history of cultural survival (Fred Lujan, Isleta Gov.), and from very individual solutions such as returning to original names and belief systems (Joe Garcia, San Juan Gov.) to statements on the part of official representatives of Pueblo interests acknowledging the merging of Spanish and Pueblo traditions in many realms of contemporary Pueblo society and culture (Regis Pecos, executive director of the state Office of Indian Affairs).

IV.1.5 AUTHENTICITY AT OMVC

How do these practices translate to strategically ascribing authenticity to the Oñate center as well as to Rivera's sculpture? The Oñate center was dedicated to the memory of the beginnings of Hispanic settlement, presented as predating the efforts by rival European powers. Precedence distinguished and legitimized the support extended to the project, highlighted in the notion of an alleged previous 'neglect of Hispanic history.' The rationale was accompanied by a claim to continuity constructed through ancestry, witnessed in the center's contributions to genealogical research. Going beyond a subjective feeling of familial connectedness, the relation (of project proponents) to the first settlers was demonstrated by reference to the historical record and selectively confirmed through historical scholarship. Consequently, Rivera promoted the design for his Oñate sculpture as based on research of the available sources and as developed in consultation with direct descendants of the conquistador.²²⁹ The artist's comments and his other works point to an illustrative rather than interpretive aesthetic approach that aspires to a 'historically accurate' rendition rather than a creative representation.

Yet Rivera's claims to authenticity must be qualified not just with regard to the narrative he wrought but also with regard to the available evidence. As critics remarked, in the absence of contemporaneous portraits or written descriptions of the conquistador, the artist rendered an image based on previous, likewise 'compromised' representations.²³⁰ Thus, Rivera's statue commemorates a historical type rather than a fully developed personage, remaining silent on the unfavorable parts of Oñate's biography and promoting a narrative that approaches a foundational myth rather than a balanced and genuinely historical account. The past that is communicated through Rivera's Oñate is purified of the excesses of colonization or their consequences for the present, and it also is a past that exists without relation to place.²³¹ Such circumstances considerably remove the portrait of Oñate that Rivera presented to the public from claims to authenticity.

²²⁹ Rivera had contacted Manuel Gullon y de Oñate from Spain as a direct descendant and authority and to serve as inspiration for the sculpture, cf. Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998; "Proud Actions."

²³⁰ Rivera had to rely on representations of later prominent colonials such as *reconquista* leader Diego de Vargas; cf. Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998. As mentioned earlier, the sculpture is indebted to Cisneros's cover illustration for Simmons (1991). Loewen further undercut the artist's claims to historical accuracy when he observed that the type of horse represented in the sculpture could not have been available to the Spanish explorers of the sixteenth century (1999: 119).

²³¹ Chris Wilson (1997: 30) remarked on the incongruence of representation and location when he pointed to the fact that the sculpture was erected in the Española Valley, home not just to the alleged descendants of Oñate but also to a significant number of Pueblo Indians.

IV.2 AMBIVALENCE AT OMVC

Much like the controversial debate, the material manifestation of a certain perspective on the past reveals the malleability and instability of memory often observed when the past is invoked for present purposes. Located at the terminus of the historic *entrada*, the Oñate sculpture in Alcalde was a suitable anchor to draw marginal northern New Mexico into the state anniversary. When it was damaged on the eve of the Oñate *Cuartocentenario*, the dissonances and silences of the often invoked narrative of tri-ethnic harmony in the Land of Enchantment became visible and, eventually, audible. The ‘foot chopping’ resonated with echoes of earlier protest against conquistador commemorations and redirected attention to the claims made through and at the (previously rather neglected) site of memory. The renewed attempt at silencing the third voice represented by the reattachment of Oñate’s foot was countered by sustained commentary in the press that perpetuated the subversive act of creative destruction. The mutilation of the sculpture not only turned the punishment on the judge, it also initiated and opened discussion about the past. Cutting off the rider’s foot in an act of symbolic retaliation, the ‘vandals’ forced the dark chapter of colonial violence back into public debate and into collective memory. The deconstruction of Oñate’s representation and the controversy about his historic significance rather than preceding educational and commemorative endeavors eventually established the events of 1598 and their ambivalent aftermath in the collective memory and inscribed the site memorably on the collective mental map of New Mexico. However, by virtue of the location the vandalism at OMVC also alluded to further ambivalences that contribute to articulations of Hispanic identity in New Mexico.

IV.2.1 OÑATE’S AMBIVALENCE

The debate over the figure, legacy and appropriate commemoration of Juan de Oñate was informed by an oppositional perspective on the past in which the contending factions cast the historical actors as either heroes or villains in order to enlist them for their respective attempts at presenting and challenging competing constructions of the past and of identity. The positions and rhetorical strategies appear exemplary for the commemorative dichotomy that Danto (1985) had highlighted in his definition of monument and memorial, emphasizing either the triumphant beginnings of Spanish colonization or the suffering and loss of Pueblo culture and juxtaposing a celebratory with a more reflected style of commemoration. The timely damage to the Oñate sculpture, however, spotlighted the contradictions inherent in the icon (Trujillo). Ambivalences became evident not just in the critique of the narrative presented at the center, but more and more forcefully in the controversy about Oñate’s merit.

As the controversy evolved, authenticity and the affirmative concepts indexed by it dissolved in face of the historical evidence. Oñate emerged as an ambivalent icon rather than an allegorical figure with a clear moral definition. Moreover, the strategies of authentication that aimed at firmly anchoring the historical events in their New Mexican context paradoxically contributed to a decontextualization that allowed them to be instrumentalized for widely different purposes. Claiming authenticity in this way naïvely or intentionally ignored the mediated character of historical evidence and its representations.

Especially in the early phase of the Alcalde project, news reports communicated both the Battle of Acoma and Oñate's indictment to the public and thus attempted a balanced account. They thus made up for what both the sculpture and the dedication of the Oñate center failed to achieve. In citing critical voices they signaled acute awareness of the ambivalence inherent in the historic character whose "name would ever remain linked with New World despotism" (Sharpe Dec. 1991: 46) and reminded readers that the conquistador's "perseverance and courage as explorer [were] tainted by acts of barbarism" (Nelson 29 Dec. 1991: 1F).²³² They also advised moderating the emphasis on the figure of Oñate in favor of the processes leading to and accompanying colonial settlement.²³³

However, the mutilation of the sculpture at OMVC and the ensuing controversy about the *Cuartocentenario* eventually forced Oñate proponents to openly acknowledge the ambivalences of historical evidence. Brooke summarized the conflict of interpretations when he pointed to the central opposition in the Oñate controversy: "[I]n the American Southwest, while Pueblo Indians complain about the 'butcher of Acoma,' Spanish descendants are raising larger-than-life statues of their conquistador" (9 Feb. 1998). In the words of former state historian Thomas Chavez, the iconic conquistador had "accomplished amazing feats, yet made grievous errors" which eventually brought him down in his own lifetime (qtd. in Diaz 8

²³² Nelson's feature articles set the tone for further attempts at a balanced perspective in media reports. Working with revelatory juxtapositions, he set the artist's promotion of a "proud" horse "carrying important cargo" against a more detached historical contextualization, or indicated his own reservations towards a work that "stresses only the ideal" (29 Dec. 1991). He also juxtaposed the apologetic stance of historian McGeagh and the critique of eminent anthropologist Alfonso Ortiz, who denounced claims to Oñate's fame based on his administrative failures and brutal punishment; Nelson 29 Dec. 1991: 1F. Likewise, Sharpe contextualized Oñate as a "conquistador with a tarnished reputation," whose rehabilitation was to be effected by "a heroic-sized statue and visitors' center [...] some four centuries after he was stripped of his New Mexico governorship and convicted of immorality and cruelty"; cf. Sharpe Dec. 1991: 45.

²³³ For historian Joseph P. Sanchez, director of the Spanish Colonial Research Center at U NM, Oñate's overwhelming presence detracted from the significance of first Hispanic settlement, comparable in importance and consequence to Puritan settlement on the East coast; cf. Sharpe Dec. 1991: 46. State historian Thomas Chávez (24 Apr. 1998) suggested re-interpreting the *Cuartocentenario* as a commemoration of survival and tolerance rather than just the "celebration of an individual or of a culture." Pueblo historian Joe Sando called for a shift of attention to the everyday experiences and actors of colonial life, thus urging a thorough revision of Bolton's old Borderlands paradigm; cf. López 24 Apr. 1998.

Jan. 1998).²³⁴ While supporters of Oñate commemoration preferred to emphasize the benefits of the conquistadors' 'contributions,' they began to restrain their previously unchecked praise for the colonial leader, if in barren phrases like "He deserves to be recognized for his substantial accomplishments. However, there is the matter of Acoma" (Salazar 4-5 Mar. 1998). Grudgingly, supporters of a celebratory style in the *Cuartocentenario* learned to acknowledge the full record: "We're not proud of some of the things Oñate did but that's part of our history and we have to recognize it."²³⁵

When Oñate apologists could no longer deny the implication in colonial subjugation and economic exploitation of their 'great man' of New Mexican history, they defensively declared present standards as inappropriate for judging historical occurrences and thus downplayed the significance of the impact of colonization on the resident population. Their apology of Oñate builds on what they call 'the attitude of the times' and incurs the inevitability of historical change.²³⁶ By severing the legacy from its originator, they were able to accommodate the negative impact of colonization that critics attributed to Oñate's expedition.²³⁷ The establishment of Oñate as an all-encompassing founder turns the proponents' historical narrative into a foundational myth designed to tie New Mexico to the national narrative and to legitimize its regional culture by reference to a set of shared assumptions about American society. Proponents sought to construct positive continuities with the past according to the patterns of recognition history, measuring the Spanish legacy primarily through its material and economic changes and citing intangible transformations such as the linguistic and religious "contributions" to be "found in the values people have" (Arellano qtd. in Baldauf 27 May 1998). The intangibles especially were responsible for a profound spatial reorientation of the established cultural landscape because the network of

²³⁴ Cf. also "Group" 14 Jan. 1998; Hummels 17 Jan. 1998. The dichotomy of 'hero' and 'villain' (Rivera 11 Jan. 1998) and the notion of glorification despite atrocities can be found in many statements on the *Cuartocentenario*, even by critical activists: "There are some people who glorify Juan de Oñate, despite the atrocities he inflicted on Pueblo Indians"; SWOP qtd. in "New Mexico" 10 July 1998.

²³⁵ Santa Fe *Cuartocentenario* organizer Albert Gallegos qtd. in Diaz 9 Jan. 1998: 3. When Chavez contends that Oñate was "punished by his own people for his wrongs, yet praised by his own captain, the poet Villagra (who was himself brought to task), for his achievements" he further illustrates the ambivalence toward Oñate expressed even during his lifetime; Chávez 24 Apr. 1998, emphases mine; also Linthicum 24 Jan. 1998.

²³⁶ Salazar (4-5 Mar. 1998) expresses this attitude in his warning against judging Oñate "in the security of the 20th century with the benefit of 400 years of hindsight." Historian Robert McGeagh (1990), Oñate biographer Marc Simmons and state historian Thomas Chavez share the perspective; cf. Rivera 11 Jan. 1998; Nelson 29 Dec. 1991; Sharpe Dec. 1991.

²³⁷ In the same vein, Oñate apologists remind the public of warfare and violence as a constant in human relations: "It was what they did, when one country conquered another, and there was cruelty involved. I don't approve of it, but it happened 400 years ago"; Romero qtd. in Baldauf 27 May 1998. Cf. also Domrzalski 19 Jan. 1998; McGeagh in Sharpe Dec. 1991. The position was adopted by Arellano, acting director of OMVC in 1998 (Diaz 8 Jan. 1998; López 24 Apr. 1998), as well as by artist McCormick who sculpted yet another statue for the New Mexico National Guard headquarter; cf. Diaz 22 Apr. 1998.

churches and missions initially aimed at submerging, if not erasing the spiritual geography of the Pueblo people and because the debate about changes on the land further underscored the conquistador's ambivalent role. For them, the profound material and ideological transformations that colonization had wrought upon pre-colonial spaces justified colonization and determined the legacy of the first colonists.

While the exclusive focus on Oñate's accomplishment and legacy as expressed by Simmons and further Oñate supporters had amounted to whitewashing a solidly researched historical record, critics of the commemoration countered the exaggeration of Oñate's indelible imprint with a similar exaggeration of his bloody trail. They pointed to the Battle of Acoma as another iconic event of Oñate's colonial enterprise and a counterpoint to the acts of founding, presenting it as the nadir of early interethnic relations and the starting point for a tradition of resistance that informed the protests against uncritical Oñate glorification in the present. Arguments between proponents and opponents of Oñate commemoration that tried to paint his memory in the stark contrasts of black and white thus failed to account for the cultural complexity of present-day New Mexico and offered no explanations for the perceptible results of cultural exchange that characterize the regional culture.²³⁸

IV.2.2 "IT'S TIME TO TELL THE OTHER STORY"

The Oñate controversy ranged over a spectrum of opinions that partly reflected academic perspectives on the past, contrasting traditional event-oriented approaches to the history of the West with those of the New Western History inspired by a process-oriented social history and indebted to a perspective *from* the West rather than *on* the West. Eventually, as then Navajo Nation President Albert Hale remarked with regard to the *Cuartocentenario*, awareness of the ambivalence in historical figures ought to prompt a far-reaching revision of regional history: "It's time to remember that there are two stories to every conquest. Until now, only one story has been told. This year, it is time to tell the other story" (qtd. in Rivera 11 Jan. 1998).

²³⁸ State historian Thomas Chávez attributed the exclusive attitude displayed by numerous Hispanics in the controversy to discomfort with the complexities produced by the coexistence of different cultures. Where the established oppositions and categories are challenged and dissolve in "complicated and gray areas" of history, he trusted that we would find more genuine answers to the "real issues." With regard to the ambivalence of Oñate as a point of reference for commemoration, he suggested framing his legacy instead in terms of the sensual experiences of everyday life like sounds (music and dances), smells and tastes (food) and sights (architecture) that reveal the mixed character of New Mexican customs. Spanish place names, bilingualism and the state flag that unifies Native American symbolism and Spanish colors were to him proof of the profundity of cultural synthesis. The argumentation corresponds with the official interpretations offered by Gov. Johnson and former ambassador Frank Ortiz that emphasized a continuity of cultural exchange; cf. Chávez 24 Apr. 1998; Johnson, "Message"; Ortiz 24 Apr. 1998.

In an address occasioned by the *Cuartocentenario* Inauguration, news anchor Conroy Chino had called for “confronting the unpleasant truth of our collective past” and urged his audience not to forget the “dark side of New Mexico’s history” that included disdain of Native Americans and the abrogation of their human dignity that had justified economic exploitation, cruelties and warfare and caused massive loss of life upon European contact (Chino 10 July 1998). The activists of the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) more explicitly exposed the “other story” implied in Oñate’s glory in uncompromising words and stark images:

[S]ettlement of New Mexico was not a peaceful, benevolent mission by Juan de Oñate and the Spaniards. There are people who [...] want us to believe that Oñate came to New Mexico and ‘saved’ the indigenous people and brought in prosperity and good will. They were conquistadores, conquerors. The Spaniards came in for god, glory and gold, and not in that order [...]. They forced the Pueblo Indians to give them food, they occupied Indian lands, they enslaved, tortured and killed hundreds of Indians, and attempted to destroy native religious beliefs and practices. (10 July 1998)

SWOP deliberately framed the history of the Southwest in terms of imperial expansion and thus constructed another continuity when they referred to the *Cuartocentenario* as the “400th anniversary of the Spanish colonization and subsequent U.S. colonization of what is now known as the U.S. Southwest” and to 1998 as a year of commemorating the founding of New Mexico as the “first permanent foreign colony in the present day U.S.” (10 July 1998). Conveniently forgotten in 1998, they argued, were two more expansionist dates: the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) that resulted in “Mexico losing half of its country to the U.S.” and the Spanish American war of 1898 that furthered U.S. expansion in the Caribbean and Pacific world when several Spanish colonies were brought under U.S. control.²³⁹ Critics of the *Cuartocentenario* thus called to mind that the toll of colonization was not just paid in a distant past, but that ethnic groups in the Southwest live with “day-to-day reminders of the conquest” (Limerick) like higher rates of poverty and unemployment and other forms of inequity.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed formerly Mexican citizens in the U.S. Southwest their rights to citizenship and property. As citizenship in Mexico had included the indigenous people of the area, the legal protection had to be extended to Native Americans. Respect for Mexican rights and property titles, however, soon existed more on paper than in reality. With the Spanish American war, the U.S. expanded their dominion into the Pacific and the Caribbean, taking control over the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii as well as Puerto Rico and an independent Cuba.

²⁴⁰ Limerick discourages closure of the historical record through temporal and moral distancing: “The defenders of the older figures seem to be saying, ‘Let’s just admire this person from the past. Let’s assume the injuries inflicted by that person are done.’ [...] Yes, it’s been a long time since the cutting off of feet ... but to say that that means it is time to forgive and forget is wrong. The inequities still exist”; qtd. in Griego 21 June 1998. In his Inauguration Address for the *Cuartocentenario*, Conroy Chino also refers to lasting inequities when he admonishes audiences not to forget the cost of conquest with regard to human dignity, the cruelties of war as

Telling the other story, however, also meant restoring the Other's agency, in the past as well as in the present.²⁴¹ On a smaller scale, then, the debate over visions and revisions of New Mexico's past reenacted the debate over commemorating the conquest that had evolved around the Columbus Quincentennial.

IV.2.3 COMPLICATING THE OTHER STORY: HISPANICS' AMBIVALENCE

In their attempts at building and affirming Hispanic identity in New Mexico through claims to Hispanic precedence, biographical and social continuity to colonial times, unambiguous historical evidence and spectacular reenactment, Oñate proponents perpetuated a conflict of the past into the present that is crassly incongruent with the history and status of interethnic relations in modern-day New Mexico. Firstly, the definition of (Hispanic) Self in the controversy rested on the exclusion of (Pueblo) Other and thus marked the purposes of identity building as suspended between Old World, white, and European identifications on the one hand and New World, native, and American on the other. Secondly, constructing continuities through Oñate's legacy rendered sacrosanct the historical experience for which he stood and thus provoked protest against such 'whitewashing' and closure of history. Thirdly, neither support nor criticism of Oñate commemoration could be neatly broken down along ethnic lines. Lastly, and most pertinent to my argument, while the debate suggested a Hispanic-Pueblo antagonism, especially the reference to nineteenth-century developments in the Southwest implies that the dichotomies of national (Anglo American) historical narratives are inadequate to explain the formation of ethnic identities in a (more than) tri-cultural state: Rather, the concern for building identity and historical awareness must be viewed in the light of an ongoing process of checking the promises of equality and participation against the realities of racially founded prejudice and exclusion in U.S. society.

New Mexico's multicultural foundations and consistent diversity inform a social context that is gradually moving away from the binary construct of dominant and minority populations. Therefore, attempts at building collective identity according to the pattern of binary oppositions led to intensification of ethnic and social conflict rather than to its resolution. Rather, surveying the history of relations between colonizing self and colonized other in the Southwest suggests the emergence of distinct spaces that circumscribe the

well as the lasting impact of economic exploitation and demographic losses through disease; cf. Chino 10 July 1998.

²⁴¹ Historian Joe Sando, director of the Institute of Pueblo Indian Research and Study Center in Albuquerque, affirmed historic Native American agency when he pointed to the active role that Acoma took in the violent clash, at the same time downplaying Oñate's centrality: "The Indians wanted to fight the Spaniards. [...] Oñate was not a saint. No one is a saint"; cf. Diaz 8 Jan. 1998.

respective interethnic experience and that overlap at the sites dedicated to the memory of Oñate. Put simply, processes of cultural exchange between Hispanics and Native Americans tended towards the creation of *mestizo* spaces while the attitude of Anglo Americans towards Native as well as New Mexican Americans was marked by exclusion and ethnic segregation.

From a national vantage point, the controversies over the sites and forms of commemorating Oñate in New Mexico resembled the discussions about Columbus's 'discovery' and ensuing colonization in 1992. In terms of Anglo American frontier concepts, the frontier advanced and the Other gave way to progress. Hispanics in New Mexico, however, found themselves on both sides of the 'frontier,' at various phases in history and as both subjects and objects of conquest. Therefore, as Brooke plausibly argued, Oñate commemoration originated in Hispanic anxieties over loss of influence and control in multicultural New Mexico:

Hispanic residents are clinging to Oñate out of insecurities over losing their language, culture and demographic dominance. In recent years, Hispanic residents have slipped from majority to minority status as New Mexico has become a sunbelt magnet for migrants from around the nation. Spanish no longer echoes around Santa Fe as the 10th generation of Spanish descendants has assimilated to the point of losing its ancestral language. (Brooke 9 Feb. 1998)

Yet such anxiety is not a phenomenon of the recent past. Hispanic memories and identities must be assessed in the full context of the histories they evoke, accounting for the relationship between Native Americans and Hispanics that began with conquest and colonization as well as for Anglo-Hispanic relations that were marked by the annexation of the Southwest to the United States and by processes of Hispanic expropriation and disempowerment after 1848.

The impulse to build identity and historical awareness through affirmative Oñate commemoration is rooted in a history of ethnic recognition and resistance to discrimination that dates back to the statehood campaigns around 1900 and to the accommodationist "Mexican-American Era" (Garcia) beginning in World War II. Empowerment and ethnic identity were again brought to national prominence during the civil rights movement and reinvigorated in debates over the National History Standards or over bilingual education of the mid-1980s.²⁴² The Oñate controversy in many respects constitutes resistance to an image (and experience) of Hispanics in New Mexico that does not care to distinguish between resident and immigrant populations, continuing an outside perspective created during the

²⁴² The role of education as one factor in the struggle for civil rights and social equality was summarized in the slogan "We want education, not contempt" driving a 1968 strike in Albuquerque of high school students associated with the New Mexico branch of the Chicano movement, Reies Lopez Tijerina's *Alianza Federal de Mercedes*; cf. Swadesh 1968: 172-73. The concern for public education also informs OMVC director Arellano's programmatic statement that the center was to "democratize knowledge" through its numerous cultural and academic activities for the community; cf. Arellano Nov. 1997; also Nunez-Janez 2002.

territorial era. Between annexation around 1850 and statehood in 1912, perceptions of the cultural or social Other were characterized by a rise of xenophobic sentiment and racial discrimination. Therefore, both proposing and resisting Oñate celebration in 1998 represented a condemnation of imperial (Anglo) nostalgia; both amounted to an exhortation to acknowledge and analyze the uncomfortable realities and common historic experiences resulting from conquest, 400, 150 and 100 years after the respective ‘events.’

Descended from a conquering as well as a conquered population, Hispanics in present-day New Mexico are caught in an ambivalent status that leads to oftentimes paradoxical attempts at framing their historical experience: Regarding themselves as a conquered people and enduringly disadvantaged by Anglo annexation they demand that their story be told as ‘the other story’ of territorial expansion. Yet their counter-narrative originates not in the nineteenth but in the sixteenth century, reduplicating a story of expansionist triumph in commemorating Oñate rather than affiliating with the resistance to spatial encroachment, xenophobia and discrimination that has characterized the experience of Hispanics in New Mexico for more than a century. Perceptions of the past alternate between nostalgia for a vanishing ethnic past and belief in the inevitability of progressive assimilation. At the same time, historical awareness hovers between the tenets of recognition history on behalf of a victimized minority and the conventions of national history that has long tended to privilege (white) civilizers and (superior) conquerors. Hispanics reside in an awkward position between the forces and patterns of assimilation and segregation, on either side of the majority-minority divide. In their attempt to regain a subject position, Hispanic proponents of Oñate were thus embattled on two fronts.

Charles Montgomery calls this dilemma the trap of memory, elaborating on the consequences for historical awareness of what John Bodine had called the tri-ethnic trap as early as 1968: “Spanish heritage offered no answer to the problem of social inequality. [...] it portrayed *Hispanos*, and often they portrayed themselves, as a Spanish colonial people – a people of the past. That was the trap of Spanish heritage” (Montgomery 2000: 480).²⁴³ The entrapment of the tri-ethnic myth in this case lies in the fact that social status may be enhanced by adding a symbolic dimension through cultural expressions, but that symbolic

²⁴³ To Montgomery, Spanish heritage drew primarily on northern New Mexican traditions as a memory realized in architecture and folk art revivalism, in the Santa Fe Fiesta and in political rhetoric (2000: 491). While Anglo promoters of the tri-ethnic myth revived ‘Spanish’ folk culture as a “broader critique of industrial America”(493), Hispanics embraced it to escape racial marginalization and proletarianization as ‘Mexican peons’ (482; 487). While Montgomery tries to set his idea of the trap of memory apart from both Bodine’s (1968) and Rodríguez’s (1987) uses of the concept of the tri-ethnic myth (512 n66), I understand his analysis of the acts of memory embraced by Hispanic New Mexicans as a particularly elucidating example for the power of ‘containment’ with regard to political participation and social equity inherent in that myth.

acts of cultural representation still remain powerless in efforts to improve status. As exemplified in the bilingual plaque for the Oñate monument in Alcalde, the Hispanic experience in northern New Mexico was given a position of precedence that could not be translated into social or political dominance. Caught in the entrapments of tri-ethnic myth and 'bi-polarized' memories, Hispanic New Mexicans were struggling to regain actual and symbolic territory lost to Anglo America during the nineteenth century at the same time that they were fighting Native American resistance to symbolic reconquest through the retelling of a history they considered their own. In a paradoxical manner, they cited their own subjugation by Anglo America in order to legitimize celebrating the large-scale subjugation of native peoples throughout the Americas they had themselves initiated.

IV.3 FROM MONOLOGUE TO DIALOGUE IN OÑATE COMMEMORATION

When the re-presentation of the historic figure of don Juan de Oñate y Salazar lost one foot to the act of quadricentennial retribution, the historic character remained enduringly incapacitated as a projection plane for Hispanic identification. The act exposed the ambivalence in the historic character and destabilized the link between past and present used to justify and legitimize present cultural constructs and social conditions. The desire for the authentic that has traditionally informed notions of identity rooted in a shared past was challenged by the need to embrace ambiguity. When Oñate's significance was reduced to oppositional interpretations of his role as either hero or villain, public opinion split into two camps championing diametrically opposed perceptions of what constituted authentic representation of the past: For one side, a celebratory recognition of the enduring achievement of Oñate's exploration and colonization that highlighted his beneficial 'legacy' rendered a commemorative form authentic. For those who regarded themselves heirs to the historic actors, capturing truth consisted in telling an unchallenged story of colonial success, to the exclusion of the involuntary recipients.²⁴⁴ In the categories of this study, this attitude that also characterizes much of the so-called recognition history (cf. Seefeldt 2005: 198) represents a monologic narrative.

For the other side, authenticity was to be achieved through a carefully balanced account of colonial endeavors that included misjudgment and failures on the part of the actors as well as acts of resistance (or accommodation) on the part of the colonized. In emphasizing a shared humanity they questioned the preeminent position of the colonial leader and elevated

²⁴⁴ However, appreciating the Spanish "contributions" from the viewpoint of their present-day usefulness reveals the same ahistoric attitude that Oñate proponents accuse their critics of applying - a reverse case of "judging Oñate by modern standards" or even a perversion of the much-maligned "political correctness"; Simmons qtd. in Brooke 9 Feb. 1998; cf. also Salazar 4-5 Mar. 1998; Baldauf 27 May 1998.

the experience of the common colonial to commemorative worth. For them, the story to be told at sites of memory like OMVC must engage the processes of mutual transformation implied by the term colonial encounter, thereby reflecting impulses to restore agency to all participants as advocated by the New Western History. Theirs would be a dialogic attitude to representing the past.

IV.4 FROM EVENT TO PROCESS

While the different groups that rallied around OMVC strove to explain, defend, affirm and criticize present-day culture and society in New Mexico from their historic origins in a ‘complete’ and ‘truthful’ account of the regional past, the exclusive versions they presented perpetuated the ambivalence of the historic record and reinforced binary oppositions. While Oñate proponents commemorated the historic legacy by invoking the moment of the conquistador’s glory and turned Oñate into an icon of Hispanic success in New Mexico, Oñate opponents emphasized the processes of culture change and interaction set in motion when the Spanish colonists first arrived, highlighting the collective dimensions of historical experience. Nevertheless, up to the *Cuartocentenario* the memory of Oñate remained suspended between critique and celebration, reduplicating Oñate’s legal condemnation and literary praise in the colonial era. Proponents denounced critical commentary as merely “divisive rhetoric” originating in political convictions of the civil rights era and suggested that it instrumentalized the historical record for a specific agenda: In order to explain quadricentennial aggression and resistance, Oñate proponents attributed the roots of discontention to “a trend of pan-Indianism. We’re suffering the fallout of political correctness and the ethnic chauvinism of the ‘60s. And in my mind, rather than allowing us to take a look back clearly, these things are tending to divide society” (Chavez qtd. in Rivera 11 Jan. 1998). As it turned out, the divisiveness of the symbolic struggle over the “ownership” of history was mostly deplored by those not directly affected by its negative implications. Addressing or omitting the silences in the existing historical record amounted to a declaration of political affiliation rather than an expression of cultural attitude. Especially this latter aspect aligns the Oñate controversy with the battles of the culture wars, as reflected in the following denunciation of revisionism and cultural diversity:

The new history wants to discredit those individuals who have traditionally been identified as the heroes or “great men” of history, and to replace them by the “common man” or “ordinary people: It is not only elitist individuals who are disparaged and displaced, but also the great themes and events of history in which individuals necessarily figure preeminently. Included in this, naturally, are the epic theme of Discovery and the heroic Missionary movement. (Himmelfarb 1994)

Prominent statements illustrate the collision of historical paradigms and suggest a shift of historic sensibilities: Albert Hale emphasized the continuity of Native American struggles to protect territorial as well as cultural integrity against European invasion when he argued that “[i]t is time to remember the cost of conquest. Courage is measured by the valor of the opponents; if the daring of Spanish conquerors is honored, so should the courage of the original inhabitants” (qtd. in Rivera 11 Jan. 1998). He thus expressed a clear opposition to Simmons who lamented political correctness and cultural sensitivities and whose statements defensively rejected a differentiated perspective on the past, casting it as a result of intimidation rather than reasoning and as a weakening of the historical argument: “History is not for sissies [...] But today, people see history not as remembering the past, but as mining the past to promote a certain political agenda” (qtd. in Griego 21 June 1998).²⁴⁵ The argument over Oñate in 1998 thus emerged as a war of (not always just) words about a bloody battle of the past, and the memory of past aggression called forth resistance in the present.

IV.5 FROM EXCEPTIONALIST SPACE TO COMMON GROUND

It can safely be argued that the ‘vandalism’ of early 1998 shook the fundamental assumptions of Oñate commemoration. For a while, it seemed that proponents and opponents of Oñate commemoration would remain engaged in a battle about memory. However, the controversy has provided a new middle ground between Oñate proponents who speak for their disenchanted Hispanic constituency and the realm of Oñate opponents who oppose symbolic repetition of Spanish conquest from which a new perspective on the past as well as the future of New Mexico is beginning to emerge. Popular perceptions and conceptions of New Mexican history have since become more dynamic. Beginning with reports that negotiated the terrain between the selective positions of Oñate glorification and Oñate condemnation, and going beyond appeals to ‘telling the other story’ and ‘setting the historical record straight,’ interpretations have tried to account for the resistance to Oñate commemoration and vandalism of the Alcalde sculpture based on a historical consciousness informed by a processual perspective on the past that considers conquest as a complex of power imbalances bearing on indigenous as well as colonizing societies. Owing to the ambiguities of the historical record, emphasis in commemoration shifted from the abstractions of temporal-

²⁴⁵ Simmons fiercely rejects all forms of historical revision with regard to Oñate and denounces the attack on the statue as a disgrace attributable to exaggerations of Oñate’s failure: “Chopping off the feet (of the Acoma warriors), in context, was a small part of Oñate’s life. These days people want to focus on one thing and use it to discredit the entire individual [...] Given the nature of sensitivity, it’s not possible to commemorate anybody in history or honor anything. [...] You could only honor angels, and there are no angels”; qtd. in Rivera 11 Jan. 1998; cf. also Brooke 9 Feb. 1998. Rivera’s feature article highlights the competing perspectives on the shared past.

cultural concerns to the experientialisms of spatio-social issues, reflected in the Oñate controversy as a shift from commemorating an individual ‘culture heros’ to commemorating a collective historical experience. Correspondingly, the frame of reference for commemoration widened from individual site to shared space.

Consequently, New Mexico’s anniversary year also became an occasion to evoke the unique character of the state in addition to commemorating the collective experiences that tie the regional past to national memory. Persistence in face of adversity and a tradition of multiculturalism that transcends assimilationist positions were characteristic features of official perceptions of the concept of shared space:

New Mexico is a *story of survival*. [...] The various cultures—and there are more than three—were not eliminated in any holocaust but have survived and function today. This is the legacy of 400 years. It is a legacy with a lesson, for the people involved with this story learned the lesson of toleration. They learned to live with each other despite disagreements and disruptions and, over time, have learned that we are better off as a result. [...]

The *cuartocentenario* is much more than the celebration of an individual or of a culture. It is the *example* of learning to live together despite battles, rebellions, occupations, religious differences, technological advances and superimposed political systems. *We New Mexicans have improved upon the old melting-pot concept*. We continue to survive together, yet have maintained and even admire our cultural differences. As a result we, as New Mexicans, have much to commemorate. (Chávez 24 Apr. 1998; emphases mine)

In this tour de force of four hundred years of history, Chávez cast New Mexico (as others have done before him) as an example of ethnic coexistence and framed the state in exceptionalist terms. His enumeration of forms of conflict could also be read as a brief negative history of significant events in New Mexico’s history, covering the Battle of Acoma of 1598/99, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the annexation of the Southwest after the Mexican-American War of 1846/48, the anti-Catholic sentiment expressed by late-nineteenth century Anglo Protestant Americans, the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s and New Mexico’s struggle for statehood overriding the protection of civil rights granted under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.²⁴⁶ However, when Oñate proponents tried to enlist the historical experience of Native Americans as evidence for the state’s exceptionalism they met with resistance and opposition. The glorious contrast to the eastern seaboard with regard to native

²⁴⁶ See also Chino 10 July 1998. In what could be termed the affirmative subversion of his *Cuartocentenario* address, Chavez warningly evoked several examples for the failure of peaceful human coexistence, ranging from the catastrophe of the holocaust to the religiously motivated civil war in Northern Ireland, the ethnic conflicts on the Balkans and the ongoing crisis of the Middle East. Resorting to exceptionalist perceptions and constructions of the state and casting them in the rhetoric tropes and expressive forms of U.S. history has constituted the strategy of choice among (Hispanic) New Mexicans who have tried to connect their historical experience to the national imagination. It was also evident in Governor Johnson’s emphasis on the religious as well as military heritage of the state.

persistence – an often quoted argument that Chavez summarized as “more American Indians in New Mexico live on the same land their ancestors occupied at European contact than in the whole eastern half of the United States” – was invalidated with the reminder that the first colonists in New Mexico, like in the east, survived thanks to the indigenous population.²⁴⁷

* * *

While Oñate proponents had heretofore seemed satisfied with being able to explain the common situation in New Mexico based on the underlying question of origins and beginnings, Oñate critics in the *Cuartocentenario* rejected such attempts at closure and projected their vision of the past into the future, assuming that answering the question of future orientations and developments was the pertinent issue from 1998 onwards. For them, bringing up the lamentable cost of conquest was not the ultimate response to Oñate glorification. Rather, they proposed to acknowledge the unique cultural potential inherent in “four centuries of survival” and the blending of cultures in New Mexico that had resulted in shared societal values and outlook. Their position was prominently presented by Conroy Chino who in his inaugural address for the *Cuartocentenario* emphasized the recognition of Native American primacy on the land, their civilizational achievements, heritage and survival as a people not only as reason for pride and confidence, but even more as a foundation for a common bond created over four centuries of cultural cross-over. He summarized his vision in a solemn appeal to shared humanism:

I suggest that the Cuarto Centenario become a recognition of human dignity, a celebration of the human spirit. It should not revolve around one historic figure whose deeds or rather misdeeds have brought about so much divisiveness ... rather, we should use this time to draw on one another for emotional support, bridge our worlds, and replenish that spiritual bond between us. Let's put aside our differences and work toward forging better relations, a better society, a better New Mexico. We may have been enemies four hundred years ago, but now, our only enemies should be racism, prejudice and ignorance. (Chino 10 July 1998)²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ The reminder has become a common-place of early colonial European-Native American dependencies, as also evident in the concept of a feast of Thanksgiving. However, the statement also constitutes another defensive rejection of anti-Hispanic prejudice that aims at promoting a mixed ancestry and the political benefits of Spanish-Pueblo cultural merging, and in this sense represents a form of exceptionalism. A political scientist of UNM was quoted as claiming that “New Mexico really has a lot to offer other states on how different peoples can get along, [...] In many East Coast states, Indians were driven off their land, and genocide was the standard policy. Here, many native Americans have Spanish surnames, and many Hispanics have native American ancestors. And through the intermingling of cultures, we're a lot better off”; Garcia qtd. in Baldauf 27 May 1998. Joe Sando referred to the legal protection extended on Native lands through Spanish land grants and the original provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo as unique to New Mexico; cf. López 24 Apr. 1998.

²⁴⁸ In his inaugural speech, Chino offered a vast catalogue of shared values and fundamentally similar social institutions, including respect for the land, value of tradition, love of family, and respect for elders as well as autonomous governments, organized religion, and stable communities respectively. He also pointed to farming techniques, irrigation systems, and domesticated crops and animals that predated European introduction.

Chino suggests that it is possible to turn around discursive constructions that negatively affect social realities and conditions. His call for reconciliation and common action was seconded by the state historian who indicated a need for inclusive constructions of past and future built on mutual respect and acceptance of the challenges posed by multiculturalism: “New Mexico’s history, its patrimony, does not lend itself to simple solutions and stereotypes. Nor does New Mexico’s cultural survival lend itself to the ethnic chauvinism that builds itself on the denigration of others” (Chávez 24 Apr. 1998). Reconciliation implies a process that must grow from the bottom up, and requires spaces that will accommodate dialogue about the history of New Mexico in its entirety and from multiple perspectives. At OMVC argument and counter-argument had not been weighed against each other during the planning process. As the attack on the statue shows, they were expressed at different times in the development of the site. The flare-up of the Oñate controversy in 1998 underscored rather than transcended the dichotomies underlying the entrenched differences of opinion. The dialogue that might have resolved contemporary disagreements and reconciled a multicultural community was bound to commemorative occasions and therefore discontinuous. When ‘the vandals’ entered onto the commemorative stage in northern New Mexico, they requested ongoing dialogue and the creation of common ground whence to reconcile both the competing visions of New Mexican history and the conflicted legacy of Spanish conquest. To what extent the landscapes of resistance in New Mexico lend themselves to reinterpretation as a landscape of redemption will be investigated in the following chapter. I contend that the project in Albuquerque testifies to the potential of dialogue and represents an honest attempt to dissolve the dichotomies of collective memory. I investigate the quandaries of this synthesis as a trialogue in the following chapter.

TRIALOGUE

ALBUQUERQUE AND THREE ARTISTS

Were we to passively remark only on the contours of these memorials, were we to leave unexplored their genesis and remain unchanged by the recollective act, it could be said that we have not remembered at all.

(Young qtd. in Eichler *NYT* 14 Aug. 2005)

I ENCIRCLING THE MEMORIES OF THREE CULTURES

Albuquerque reflects the cultures that helped build the city through the expressions of its people in architecture, the performing arts, literature, art, agriculture, politics and personal style. We have the only All Indian Pueblo Cultural Center— no other state could have it because we're the only one that has 19 pueblos [...] And we worked hard to build a National Hispanic Cultural Center because our population is so unique.

(Santillanes qtd. in Dingman 10 Apr. 2005)

The genesis of Albuquerque's Oñate site, eventually also entitled *Cuartocentenario*, highlights the challenges that a multicultural social context poses to the representation of historical events. Just like the previous cases, it is entangled in the tri-cultural dynamics of New Mexico. In Albuquerque, like throughout the state of New Mexico, the colonial era embodied in the figure of conquistador Don Juan de Oñate was central to the commemorative celebrations of the anniversary in 1998. In many respects, it participates in and continues the debates about commemoration and identity that revolved around the quadricentennial 'vandalism' at the Oñate Monument and Visitors Center. The controversy instigated by the 'foot chopping' at Alcalde and the proposed monument project for Albuquerque are closely related in their central opposition, the question whether the ambivalent historical figure was a "gutsy trailblazer" or rather a "ruthless colonialist" (Rolwing 17 May 1998). Throughout the controversy about commemorative recognition, the perception of the historical figure of Oñate and his achievement either took to styling him the "father of New Mexico" or to depicting him as an ineffective colonial administrator and "brutal conqueror" tyrannically oppressing both the native population and his own settlers (Reed 5 Feb. 1998; Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000). Cultural and academic events debating the lasting achievement or problematic implications of the colonial enterprise were organized by committees called by the city administration, the Hispanic Culture Center or commercial institutions like the Hispano Chamber of Commerce as well as by organizations like the New Mexico Genealogical Society.²⁴⁹ Owing to debate among the city administration, the monument proponents and the

²⁴⁹ cf. Dingman 4 Jan. 1998; cf. Romero Aug./Sep. 1997. As elsewhere, fiestas, dramatizations and public reenactments were designed to celebrate the state in the figure of Oñate. According to Dingman, the New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs and the Hispanic Cultural Center acted as primary organizers for the *Cuartocentenario* on the state level, compiling the calendar of events, with input from the New Mexico Genealogical Society. All across the state, local *Cuartocentenario* committees formed to organize their local versions of Oñate's arrival. Indicating the connection of commercial and commemorative concerns, the Albuquerque *Cuartocentenario* Committee (CCC) was backed by the Hispano Chamber of Commerce; cf. Reed 24 Feb. 1998.

community, the project design evolved from a monumental piece done by one artist and honoring an individual historical figure in the style of the equestrian statue for Alcalde into a memorialization collaboratively designed and executed by three artists. The different positions of Native American and Hispanic interest groups found their realization in two separate parts of the project which express the Pueblo and Hispanic perspectives on the significance of Oñate's 'arrival' for present-day New Mexico (Fig. 12). The lively debate that began even before the *Cuartocentenario* (cf. Reed 5 Feb. 1998; June-Friesen 20-26 Oct. 2005) continues after completion of the commemorative piece for Albuquerque, owing to the project in El Paso that became another stage for the Oñate controversy after decisions had been arrived at in Albuquerque.

The Oñate project for Albuquerque that was eventually completed in fall 2005 was set to pursue ambitious goals: Project guidelines required that the design recognize cultural diversity and respond to it in a conciliatory manner. Yet the positions revealed in the Oñate controversy expressed discomfort with and even outright hostility to a vision of culture and society that turns away from a consensus-based model of history and identity and begins to dissolve the dichotomy between Self and Other. From selection of historical events to design to location and the spatial relationships thus implied, this anxiety influenced the planning process. Almost any suggestion made or opinion expressed during the debate about the design and planning of the commemorative site collided with opposite interests and historical perspectives. The Oñate controversy became more than an arena of opinions; it developed a commemorative dynamic that always also invoked an unspoken third referent. This has prompted me to address the discursive dynamic in Albuquerque as a trialogue.

Of all three sites, the struggle over the right to articulate one's history in public space was most pronounced at the projected monument in Albuquerque. Only apparently subsumed under the project title *Cuartocentenario*, its two sections *Numbe Whageh* and *La Jornada* present two antithetical statements and expressions regarding history and identity in New Mexico that are yet in search of resolution. As material expressions of public commemoration, they pull in opposite directions toward the poles of monument and memorial that Danto identified in commemorative public art. As an instrument of meaning-making, the *Cuartocentenario* thus exhibits the divisive dynamic and symbolic force of locating identity and memory in the landscape of the state's metropolitan center in a spatial manifestation. Renowned Santa Clara Pueblo artist Nora Naranjo-Morse cast her interpretation in the form of a landscape installation reminiscent of a spiral petroglyph that is entitled *Numbe Whageh* (Our Center Place). She responds in form and approach to a figural representation of the Spanish *entrada* into New Mexico, executed by artists Betty Sabo and Reynaldo Rivera. Their part of

the project, *La Jornada*, presents the ‘Hispanic contributions’ in illustrative manner. Especially the figural realist style that employs life-size bronze figures and the addition of a wall panel that provides the colonists’ names as well as historical information tie their section of the *Cuartocentenario* to forms of national remembrance that have become popular since the 1980s, represented paradigmatically on the Mall in Washington, D.C. While recognition and reconciliation were the professed goals of the commemorative project in Albuquerque, the powerful rhetoric and imagery of the tri-ethnic myth prevented a differentiated discussion of history and memory as stereotypical revisionist perspectives on the past challenged its conciliatory and emancipatory potential. The *Cuartocentenario* marks the point in the landscape of memory of New Mexico where the entrapment entailed in the tri-ethnic myth may be most clearly demonstrated. I will explore whether the realized piece represents a continuation of the myth rather than its transcendence and whether cultural diversity can be commemorated at all given the power of the master narrative.

In a more optimistic reading, the two sections of *Cuartocentenario* do tell a more complete story than the other sites as they materially integrate both Hispanic arrival and the Native American response to it. The piece articulates the moment of encounter between two cultures and contemplates the experience of fundamental cultural and economic change. Beyond the reference to a historical moment in the history of the state, the project and the controversy in Albuquerque offer an example for the ways in which communities try to prepare common ground. The successful intervention of the urban public in the municipal decision making process with regard to public art projects reflects the agency of individuals and groups through civic participation and thus constitutes a positive contribution of the divisive issue of Oñate commemoration to the building of multiethnic communities.

In the following, I trace the development of the *Cuartocentenario* based on media reports, programmatic statements and resolutions gathered in the vertical files at the Center for Southwest Research in the University of New Mexico’s Zimmerman Library. Information was complemented and updated through online media coverage and checked against interpretations posted on the Internet by activist forums. My investigation complements the studies by Dürr (2003) and Freise (2003) as well as the project history provided by Gonzales (2005; 2007) and Fields (2011). In a second part of the chapter, I discuss the spatial implications of the locations suggested and eventually selected for the *Cuartocentenario*. In a third section, I address the commemorative impulses that tended to advocate diametrically opposed concepts of memory sites – monument vs. memorial – and that contributed to an oftentimes aggressive rhetoric in the Oñate controversy. The latter especially affirms the ambivalence of Hispanic identity and harks back to Hispanophilic or Hispanophobic attitudes

informing the perspectives on Hispanic experience in national historiography. The agendas pursued in the planning of the *Cuartocentenario* culminated in a crisis that could only be overcome by tolerating separate visions. The conclusion to the chapter asks whether public art might lead to the reconciliation and the healing of historic wounds opened by the controversy about Oñate.

I.1 1997-1998: MILLIE SANTILLANES PROPOSES A MONUMENT

In 1997, the late Millie Santillanes – Hispanic community activist, Old Town resident, Cuarto Centenario Committee member and city administrator – proposed a “monument celebrating 400 years of Spanish presence in New Mexico” (Reed 5 Feb. 1998) to the city of Albuquerque Arts Board. The proposal suggested to place a monument in Tiguex Park opposite the Albuquerque Museum and near Old Town, the historic heart of the city (“Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists” 25 Feb. 1998; Fig. 13), to be completed in time for the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations (Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999).²⁵⁰ The initial proposal envisioned “a simple bust that would have cost less than \$100,000 [...],” as Santillanes declared in later statements (DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999; Gonzales “History Hits”; June-Friesen 20-26 Oct. 2005). Well connected in the community and in City Hall, Santillanes had successfully gathered a group of proponents, most of them Hispanic citizens of Albuquerque, for the monument project and acted as their spokesperson.²⁵¹ Early on, the idea emerged to commission Reynaldo “Sonny” Rivera for a bronze statue similar to the sculpture he had done for the Oñate Monument and Visitor Center in Alcalde and, when this did not come to pass, for a design depicting Don Juan de Oñate pointing the way north (DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999).

Like in the case of OMVC, the predominantly Hispanic Oñate proponents gathering around Santillanes explained their motivation to propose Oñate commemoration in the form of a monument with a perceived need for ‘recognition’ and ‘honoring’ of Hispanic ‘contributions’ to New Mexico’s history. Likewise, they were optimistic that the heightened awareness for the Hispanic role in continental American history created during the Columbus Quincentennial in 1992 would guarantee inclusion of their project into the catalogue of

²⁵⁰ Reports are inconsistent as to the date of the first proposal: Zoretich referred to 1994 based on a quote from Santillanes (18 Mar. 1999; 6 Apr. 1999). An Editorial (12 Feb. 1999) explicitly states 1997 while other reports reference the date indirectly; cf. Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999; Potts 27 Jan. 2000. That in 1997 a memorial honoring Oñate was already approved by the CCC under Santillanes’s leadership seems to have been wrongly stated by Potts (27 Jan. 2000). I refer to 1997 as the likely date for the original proposal, based on the majority of reports.

²⁵¹ Cf. also DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999; Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999. Zoretich (18 Mar. 1999) highlighted Santillanes’s civic activism, reflected also in her advocacy for Old Town (Reed 5 Feb. 1998) and her involvement with planning the city’s *Cuartocentenario* events; cf. DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998; “Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists” 25 Feb. 1998; Potts 27 Jan. 2000. Her position was reinforced by her administrative offices of city clerk (Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999) and, at a later stage in project development, Director of Cultural Services (Dingman 10 Apr. 2005).

Cuartocentenario celebrations. However, when the Albuquerque Arts Board convened in early 1998, uncritical representation of Oñate as a Hispanic ‘culture heros’ was no longer tenable. In response to the Columbus anniversary of 1992, Native American groups had already been vocal in their criticism of the celebrations of colonialism at their expense and had staged counter-manifestations of indigenous survival. Inspired by the quadricentennial activism directed at the sculpture at OMVC, they also resisted the repetition of a merely celebratory discourse on the local stage in Albuquerque. The exclusionist, Hispanic-only agenda pressed by some within the Hispanic community with regard to the representation of history was rejected in 1998.

I.2 1998: THE ARTS BOARD COMMISSIONS A MEMORIAL

It seems that first ideas for the *Cuartocentenario* project emerged as early as 1994 and that even before 1998 the design and the commission had met with opposition (cf. Gonzales “History Hits”; June-Friesen 20-26 Oct. 2005). In a meeting in early 1998, the Arts Board developed new guidelines in order to acknowledge public commentary and to develop ways for the artists to collaborate towards a comprehensive, inclusive memorial (cf. DellaFlora “Oñate Statue Triggers”). The guidelines focused the project on the collective effort required by the colonization process and on its consequences, including both a tribute to Oñate as leader of the expedition and a recognition of the cultural contributions of the Spanish colonists to New Mexican history. Beyond giving a balanced account of the positive achievement of Spanish colonialism, the project was to include the experience of Native Americans. Most importantly, the memorial should find expressive means for the violent conflict that erupted between colonizers and colonized at Acoma, the key incident for the assessment of Oñate (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998).

Subsequently, the commission was expanded to involve three New Mexican artists of different ethnic backgrounds: Albuquerque artists Reynaldo “Sonny” Rivera and Betty Sabo as well as Nora Naranjo-Morse of Santa Clara Pueblo.²⁵² Rivera’s ideas for an Oñate statue

²⁵² While Rivera and Sabo had apparently already been commissioned, Naranjo-Morse was asked to contribute in order to uphold the image of tri-culturality in the symbolically charged site of memory. In an interview, Naranjo-Morse indicated that she might have functioned as a token; personal communication 14 Oct. 2005. She had also made that comment to June-Friesen (20-26 Oct. 2005). The three artists also brought widely differing experience and perspective with regard to public art and historical representation to the project. While both Rivera and Sabo can be regarded as considerably established local artists, Naranjo-Morse’s work has been recognized nationally and internationally. She is best known for her work in clay that employs traditional techniques to relate community-related content in a non-traditional aesthetic, yet she is also an accomplished poet, film maker and installation artist. She reflects in her work “on the tensions of producing art for a Western art market that often praises its innovative approach while, at the same, marginalizes it as ‘native’ art”; Strom “Nora Naranjo-Morse.” Regarded as one of the most innovative artists working in clay today, her large figures assume a satirical bent with regard to Anglo and Indian cultural stereotypes and mythology; cf. Peterson n.d.; also Eaton 2000. Naranjo-

were to be complemented by works of Betty Sabo and Nora Naranjo-Morse, with each of the three artists assigned a particular aspect. Ideally, it was hoped, they would develop an inclusive historical vision for the CCP: While Rivera devoted himself to the Oñate representation, Sabo was to address the settlers' experience, and Naranjo-Morse was to express the impact of Spanish colonization on the resident Native American population (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998; Reed 5 Feb. 1998). While the Arts Board earned applause for inviting public comment and for constructively managing the emerging conflict in a way that corresponded to the tri-cultural image of the state, providing for "three artists to collaborate on representing Hispanics, Indians, and Anglos in the project" ("Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists" 25 Feb. 1998), critical commentary accused the Arts Board of over-bureaucratizing and of an "art-by-committee ploy of hiring one Hispanic artist, one Native American, and one Anglo (two women and one man) to collaborate on the project" ("Arts Board" 12 Feb. 1999). Such criticism denounced transparency, participation and attempts at reaching for a balanced picture of the past through council meetings, public forums and academic conferences and blamed the Arts Board for turning the commemoration "into a caricature of political correctness" ("Arts Board" 12 Feb. 1999). As a commentary in the *Albuquerque Tribune* remarked, the openness of the procedure could be considered a structural flaw in the city's public art policies that invited undue influencing from special interest and advocacy groups during the decision-making process (Hall 19 Mar. 1999).

Despite such skepticism, the design that resulted from the new guidelines marked a significant first step in the artistic collaboration. In accordance with the tri-partite character of the CCP and the request for a comprehensive account, the Albuquerque newspapers featured the first collaborative design as "Oñate kneeling at the top of a set of stone steps. A ceremonial kiva was also part of the tableau, along with several sets of mocassins. One mocassin was missing a mate, symbolizing Oñate's orders to chop off the right foot of several of the Acoma men" (Armas 24 Feb. 1998; DellaFlora 13 Nov. 1999). The artists each provided interpretations of their approach to the theme and realization of the project, published in a feature article in the *Albuquerque Tribune* of 24 February 1998. Not surprisingly, the languages of memory that the different artists employed were still quite foreign to each other at that point in time.

Morse recently received the commission for the outside installation at the Smithsonian NMAI, Washington, D.C.; cf. Levchuk 24 May 2006. The work of Albuquerque arts advocate, painter and sculptor Betty Sabo is indebted to figurative realism, her pieces engage the viewer through their narrative and illustrative quality. Work of hers is on display on the UNM campus (*Modern Art*, 2004), at the Albuquerque Museum (*Julia Resting*, 1995) and at the Albuquerque Botanical Gardens (*The Tingleys*); cf. Asher 17 Dec. 2003; "UNM to Unveil" Aug. 2004; Grothus 22 Oct. 2005.

How difficult it was to reconcile different artistic idioms and ethnic concerns in a collaboration that involves historical representation becomes evident in statement on the project: Rivera regarded his part of the CCP in Albuquerque, like his sculpture at OMVC in Alcalde, as “a monument that brings history to light” in an affirmative acknowledgement and educational illustration of the positive contributions of “400 years of the Spanish people’s influence here in New Mexico” (Rivera 24 Feb. 1998). Trusting in the authenticating power of historic evidence, he first advertised his own expertise in historical subjects before turning to the Albuquerque plans proper. To him, “the mining, the weaving, the cattle, the Christian religion, the Spanish contribution to Southwestern traditional healing [that were] at least indirectly [...] a result of Oñate” registered as positive influences that while not condoning the conquistador’s actions justified commemorating Oñate. When he emphasized the “unique cultural situation” of “different people living side by side in relative harmony,” he expressed an opinion in accordance with the rhetoric of Southwestern Exceptionalism that builds on a pluralist myth of harmonious tri-ethnic coexistence (Rivera 24 Feb. 1998). Building identity through memory – in reaching “a better understanding of ourselves and of our history” – and the hope that the differences of perspective that surfaced in the Oñate controversy might be reconciled (in accordance with his vision) were central concerns informing his part in the CCP (Rivera 24 Feb. 1998).

Southwestern Exceptionalism is also central to Betty Sabo’s understanding of the CCP. In her somewhat paternalizing reading, the tradition of cultural exchange that made New Mexico unique was attributable to the presence of Spanish colonists who had guaranteed the survival of Native cultures.²⁵³ Her somewhat hyperbolic perspective on the *Cuartocentenario* celebrates the “beginning of what has become a wonderful partnership between the three major cultures that have lived in harmony in this beautiful land for generations” with a monument “placed in the most truly multicultural city in this country” (Sabo 24 Feb. 1998). Her Hispanophilic approach to the historic theme emphasizes the need to “tell the complete story of the Spanish colonization of New Mexico” in a narrative that sheds light on the complexities of an interwoven cultural heritage. Accordingly, Sabo meant to realize her vision in a “series of bas-reliefs that will reflect the most important contributions to this area by the Spanish colonization” (Sabo 24 Feb. 1998). Although she signaled detachment from “politically correct” decisions, Sabo carefully navigated between the positions of proponents and opponents of Oñate commemoration. With regard to the future

²⁵³ Especially the paternalistic notion of Pueblo survival grace to Spanish conquest was heavily criticized as offensive by Native American opponents of the project. Romero (18 Feb. 1998) had likewise declared Oñate the protector of both his settlers and Indian allies to whom present-day Native Americans indirectly owe their cultural persistence.

reception of the CCP, she called for a design that both respected the concerns of the proponents and endorsed the balanced representation of the colonization process that critics had called for. Sabo was convinced that the three separate visions of her artist colleagues and herself would eventually converge and produce a work far beyond “art by committee”-quality, that the fundamental idea of the project could be visualized and the different concerns of the public adequately addressed (Sabo 24 Feb. 1998). Yet Sabo’s position was maybe the most precarious among the three artists. Sabo expressed her personal anxiety of influence in a statement that summarized the dilemma the three sculptors found themselves in at that stage in the project development, suggesting both the potential and the pitfalls of collaboration among colleagues and public participation: “We should involve the city, the community, but it can go on and on if we don’t use some discretion. I’m afraid it will become intimidating to have so many people so involved. Who do we please, whose knowledge do we bow to?” (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998: C2).

Nora Naranjo-Morse based her concept for the CCP on the covert racial tension she perceived in the image of New Mexico promoted by the tourist industry, thus challenging the persistent cliché of tri-ethnic harmony. In creating “a sculpture responding to the Oñate monument from a Native American perspective” she emphasized the endurance and survival of Native American cultures despite the often devastating effects of European colonization (Naranjo-Morse 24 Feb. 1998). To her, the CCP provided a narrative chance not only to stress Pueblo cultural strength and survival, addressing a Native American audience and affirming Pueblo identity, but also to suggest a solution to overcome the anger, resentment and divisiveness within the larger public that the historical information had revealed/conjured? when it was presented in the first city council and committee meetings. She saw the project as an opportunity for meaningful dialogue about an oftentimes painful past that could be continued into the future and also as a means of avoiding a fatalistic attitude as to the alleged inevitability of historical processes by showing the common and man-made historical roots of present-day New Mexican society in “a story that would remind present-day native people [...] that our grandparents and their grandparents came out of this earth to walk on a journey created by human and environmental circumstances” (Naranjo-Morse 24 Feb. 1998). In trying to find an artistic language commensurate with the complexities of the *Cuartocentenario* she resorted to symbolic elements: a kiva as the connecting symbol for Pueblo religion, several pairs of mocassins as a metaphor for Native people walking the earth and leaving cultural imprints for posterity, a lone mocassin as symbolic of the Battle of Acoma. The symbolism of this narrative of perseverance in the face of tragedy was carried further in that the way of the mocassins continued onto the sidewalk, signaling the perseverance of spirit and strength into

the future and connecting the art work to the public space of Albuquerque (Naranjo-Morse 24 Feb. 1998). Even though Naranjo-Morse faced criticism from some Pueblos for her involvement with the CCP, she decided to continue the collaboration with Sabo and Rivera for the learning process it entailed and, more importantly perhaps, for the human interaction about public art and history that the project necessarily implied. She recalled a scene following a particularly distressing meeting that captures the potential she saw in the project:

[...] when I took on this, accepted this art project I didn't really think [...] it was going to balloon up into something very dramatic, something like this. And so, I came out of this meeting and I was disoriented and I couldn't find my car for a few seconds and so I was standing at the corner and I was almost (laughs) almost in tears – it was dark and it was cold and, uhm, this older Hispanic man stood next to me and gave me a pat on the arm and he said: "Jita, it's gonna be okay!" and I think he was responding to me from a more humanistic level. And when I realized that, it wasn't about me getting mad or disliking somebody there [...] I was dealing with something very humanistic. And that I had to approach it that way.

For Naranjo-Morse, the life-affirming power of artistic creation was the sustaining force throughout the difficult controversy, an aspect that she also emphasizes in a documentary on the project shown at the Albuquerque Museum (Naranjo-Morse 24 Feb. 1998; Naranjo-Morse, personal communication).

I.3 1998: THE OÑATE CONTROVERSY ARRIVES IN ALBUQUERQUE

The public presentation of the first collaborative design that endeavored to "address a difficult subject through a difficult, collaborative process," however, was overshadowed by the damaging of the Alcalde sculpture (cf. "Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists" 25 Feb. 1998; DellaFlora "Oñate Statue Triggers"). Not surprisingly, the most vocal opposition to Oñate commemoration in Albuquerque came from Acoma Pueblo who considered his depiction offensive and insulting to Native Americans (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998; Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000). Agreement about Oñate's significance was not in sight during the year of the *Cuartocentenario*. While Oñate critics greeted the potential demystification of Oñate that the controversy and the project entailed, implying a more complex representation of history ("Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists" 25 Feb. 1998), the prospect of an inclusive design as envisioned by the Arts Board immediately fell out of favor with Oñate proponents who had already had to part with Santillanes's initial proposal of a heroic monument. The first manifestation of the Oñate controversy provoked consideration of a third design that would downsize Oñate's presence in the CCP and instead represent the role and experience of the first settlers, sometimes reverentially referred to as *los primeros pobladores* (DellaFlora "Oñate Statue Triggers"; Rolwing 17 May 1998).

The question of including or omitting the figure of Oñate from the CCP design led to an almost unbridgeable rift between the different factions that could not be resolved by the established commissions so that the Albuquerque Public Arts Program began to seek outside consultation (“Discord” 17 May 1998). In October 1998, when the Arts Board saw its own creative resources exhausted, it called an additional advisory board, a 13-member multiethnic citizens’ Cuarto Centenario Project Planning Committee (400PPC), to work on verbal suggestions for the three artists involved in the design.²⁵⁴

I.4 1999: NEW MEXICO WITHOUT OÑATE?

In February 1999, the 400PPC submitted a design proposal to the Albuquerque Arts Board that omitted Oñate, instead suggesting a group of unnamed figures portraying Hispanic settlers and native peoples (“Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999): An extensive sculpture group was to embody “the spirit of the Spanish colonists and native peoples of New Mexico” (Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999) and to represent the “coexistence of Hispanics and indigenous people over four centuries” (Gibbs 28 July 1999). A walkway with a historical timeline would encircle the generic types shown in “peaceful activity or relationship with one another, symbolizing coexistence or mutual enrichment of separate cultural entities and their respective integrities. Their relationship is free from suggestion of social dominance or subordination” (“Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999).²⁵⁵ Further elements provided a brief history of early man in New Mexico, listed the names and numbers of Pueblo villages existing at the time of Spanish arrival, included the family names of the colonists that arrived with Oñate, and covered the vital dates of New Mexican history from Spanish arrival through Pueblo Revolt and Reconquista to Mexican Independence and into the U.S. period. As a compromise, Oñate might have been included in a bas-relief or as one piece among further full-figured sculptures of settlers, friars and American Indians, yet explicitly not as a stand-alone statue (Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999). This much sensitivity, taken together with the comment by Gordon Church, city coordinator for Public Arts project, that in the memorial as envisioned by the 400PPC the interpretation of history should be left somewhat open to the viewer (“Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999), went a little over what public opinion and the city council could take. An acerbic Editorial in the *Albuquerque Journal*, the local newspaper leaning generally more favorably to the Oñate proponents, expressed the impatience of many residents. Faced with the tedious planning

²⁵⁴ Cf. Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; Gibbs 28 July 1999; DellaFlora 13 Nov. 1999.

²⁵⁵ Several comments on the new design highlighted the egalitarian thrust of the design; cf. Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999.

process initiated by an Arts Board that appeared incapable of resolving the controversy, the editorial asked whether all that a team of consultants and several committees could come up with were

plans for an amorphous depiction of *something* that happened, 401 years ago, more or less – including settlers and native people in ‘peaceful activity or relationship with one another, symbolizing coexistence or mutual enrichment of separate cultural entities and their respective integrities. Their relation is free from suggestion of social dominance or subordination.’ Is *that* what happened? (“Arts Board” 12 Feb. 1999)

The Editor ridiculed a memorial fashion that gave up interpretive authority, made the viewer see her/himself as part of the mirror of time in highly polished surfaces and condemned the overall process of commemorating and representing the past as a “travesty” that had “transmogrified into a caricature of political correctness” (“Arts Board” 12 Feb. 1999), as “some multicultural thing that showed everybody getting along with everybody” (Domrzalski 10-16 Mar. 1999).

Crisis occurred during a phase of public comment. While discussion about possible further changes among Arts Board members had actually produced constructive recommendations for the CCP, the City Council pressed forward with a resolution that called for the explicit inclusion of Oñate and demanded that the City “clarify” its position in the controversy.²⁵⁶ The measure was initiated without public hearing and ignored the design compromise achieved by the Arts Board on March 1, 1999. It caused a major stir in the public and led to a crisis among all involved in the process, including the artists. The opposing camps became irreconcilably entrenched. Protest rallies and a heated council meeting where the public vented their frustration and outrage at the decision-making process prompted the Mayor of Albuquerque to veto a premature/precocious? council resolution that “had needlessly divided the community” and thrown all suggestions for an acceptable solution to the controversial issue from committed citizens to the winds.²⁵⁷ The mayor’s veto of the resolution was subsequently overridden by the council. Still, public discontent had sufficiently impressed the members of the city council to concede to a substitute resolution after overriding the mayor’s veto that would make “any statue of Oñate just part of a larger work of art” (Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999). Nevertheless, Rivera and Sabo threatened to withdraw from the project as they saw no way of implementing the council’s decision.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Cf. “Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999; Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999; Rhodes 15 Mar. 1999; Domrzalski 10-16 Mar. 1999; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Rhodes 15 Mar. 1999; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; DellaFlora 4 Apr. 1999; Gibbs 28 July 1999.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999; Domrzalski 25-31 Mar. 1999; DellaFlora 4 Apr. 1999; DellaFlora 13 Nov. 1999; Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999.

The Oñate controversy reached an impasse because the council decision of March 1, 1999, had disabled the factions and public opinion to move in any direction without losing face. The crisis escalated the situation in Albuquerque to a degree that the project would either die or move on. It moved fiercely on. Advocacy groups on both sides that had previously merely observed the process now intervened, even calling for legal investigation of the case. Circle of Voices, a human rights group, filed complaint against an inclusion of Oñate as a form of harassment and discrimination and called for the location as well as the design for the CCP to be reconsidered.²⁵⁹ The storm subsided somewhat during the fall. The artists, who felt that the city council resolution threatened both the creative integrity of each artist and the historical aspect of the project, requested mediation towards a continuation of their collaboration and towards cooperative completion of the project with a landscape architecture firm as well as a historian as consultants (DellaFlora 13 Nov. 1999). Eventually a compromise design was presented to the public in December 1999.

I.5 1999: DESIGN COMPROMISE

After two years of heated controversy, the artists presented design sketches and clay models for a revised design to the public in early December 1999 that provided for two artistic sections complemented by a timeline component (Fig. 14). Replacing the rather static Oñate-and-kiva proposal of early 1998 with a more dynamic and to an extent even dialogic representation, it marked a significant achievement in project development (cf. DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999). Sabo and Rivera decided to cooperate on a section called *La Jornada* (The Journey), would include Oñate among over a dozen “life-size bronze figures of settlers and livestock” in a series of individual tableaux arranged on a 60-foot berm (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). The compromise included elements of the previous design and additions suggested during the debate. The figural tableaux incorporated horses, cattle, sheep, ox carts and other items of material and intellectual culture that the colonists brought in their ‘journey’ (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). The sculpture group was arranged to suggest the colonists’ northward movement and thus to interact with the second section, a “more conceptual ‘environmental’ piece involving landscaping” which Naranjo-Morse designed as a reflection on the Native American experience (DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999). The 1999 design proposal also provided for a 4-foot-high semicircular wall to the west of the sculpture group that suggested an *acequia* and faced toward the street (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). It was to function as a

²⁵⁹ Cf. “Oñate Monument Complaint” 2 July 1999; Gibbs 28 July 1999. The city rejected jurisdiction in the matter as it neither constituted denial of services nor fell under a public accommodation clause that could have been applicable for public spaces; cf. Gibbs 28 July 1999.

prompt for visitors and a signal beyond the confines of the park space. Mirroring the example of memorial projects in the nation's capital, this part of the memorial could also accommodate a timeline with additional historical information, such as the names of the original settlers (DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999).

Naranjo-Morse arranged the environment – entitled *Numbe Whageh* (Our Center Place) – as a spiral walkway lined with low rock walls, some decorated with petroglyphs, some with texts in different Pueblo languages. Her section integrates trees and various indigenous New Mexico plants and centers on a small spring. It is conceived as a place of emergence, reflecting a central concept in Pueblo cosmology (Fig. 15).²⁶⁰ In Naranjo-Morse's words, *Numbe Whageh* was “intended to capture the area as it was before the Spanish arrived” and to recreate not just the moment but the experience of her Pueblo ancestors' first beholding the Spanish colonizers (DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999). Naranjo-Morse's spiral walkway invited visitors from the street or sidewalk into a shaded area among trees, let them gradually emerge into the light and find water. To the artist, it signaled the entry into a world entirely different from the contemporary urban context of the memorial. It also encouraged experience of and participation in the environment rather than a merely visual reception. At the same time, Naranjo-Morse invited reflection on cultural difference in the juxtaposition of two distinct spatial concepts: In the spiral environment that to her was “indicative of the native sensibility” and pre-contact worldview (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999), she presented the circular conception of Pueblo cosmology and confronted it with the linearity embodied in the *La Jornada* section. Where *Numbe Whageh* is focused on the central reflecting pool and imitates the round form of a kiva with the *nansipu* (or *sipapu*) as the place of spiritual and historical emergence of the Pueblo cultures, *La Jornada* is conceptualized as a line connecting two points in space, leading from the center of a known world to a margin. The contrast is further underlined by the difference in materials chosen for the sections – local, organic materials for *Numbe Whageh* as opposed to the bronze that requires an industrial production process (cf. Naranjo-Morse in DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). The organizing principles contrast the power of place with the power of movement and thus symbolically articulate cultural difference. In a newspaper interview, Naranjo-Morse had already emphasized differences as to the perception of time: “Native people see time in a different way. This represents that simultaneous existence and the relationship to what is the present, or what was the past – our ancestral past – and what is in the moment and beyond. So [the *Cuartocentenario*] has a sort of metaphysical symbolism to it” (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). In an interview with the author,

²⁶⁰ Cf. DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999. The collision of world views and spatial visions was also instrumental for the debate in Alcalde; see Chap. 3, esp. n236; also cf. Ortiz 1969; Swentzell 1990, Lipton 1990; Gutierrez 1991.

Naranjo-Morse further elaborated on the spatial significance of such symbolism explaining her section as a “blessed space”:

One of the things that I kept hearing from the people here, where I am from, was that there was this idea of blessed spaces and those spaces have always been and the people that blessed the space before us were our ancestors [...] I kept going back to that idea of the blessed space and I think from there I started realizing that you could make a blessed space anywhere and that in fact that blessed space would be for all people. (14 Oct. 2005)

Rivera and Sabo’s design for *La Jornada* also prominently displayed spatial concepts in the journey metaphor that was vividly evoked through the representation of the expedition along the *Camino Real* (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). Their section, however, did not suggest a coming to place, as did the circular movement of the spiral, but a linear movement through space. Also, they claimed to represent a human universal in the journey motif that to them signified “Everybody’s journey. Everything we do is a journey” (Rivera qtd. in DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). For Rivera, the individual experience of visitors at the site was secondary to the educational function of commemoration: “It was a struggle. It wasn’t a freeway out there, and I want to show that [...] I want to show the ruts, getting stuck in the sand and the mud and whatever the hell they had to go through” (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999; Fig. 16). Their expectation that “viewers come away from the memorial with more knowledge” (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999) made an emphasis on Oñate’s legacy seem natural to Rivera and Sabo. Albeit accompanied by an Indian guide, they placed Oñate at the front of the piece (Fig. 17).

Sabo and Rivera emphasized continuity between past and present through the objectification of time implied in the notion of ‘Spanish contributions’ (cf. DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999) and materialized as ‘legacy’ in their tableaux. Naranjo-Morse varied the theme of continuity when she recreated the moment of recognition that a way of life would be forever changed (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999), yet stressed survival of indigenous culture in the spatial symbolism she employed. Beyond the interpretive potential suggested in the spatial interaction of the two sections, this design transcended the boundaries of the envisioned site and thus claimed relevance beyond the assigned space of a public park. The traces of the arduous journey and the legacy of the *Camino Real* as well as native persistence were engraved into the present urban landscape with the ruts of the *carretas* (ox carts) visible on another 15 feet of pavement (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999) and with the suggestion of a kiva/place of emergence sunk into the grounds of Tiguex Park. The CCP was thus designed to function both as a historical narrative and as a space where historical experience is recreated and becomes tangible in the spatial symbolism of directions and landscape perception. The encounter of two cultural worlds found its representation in the language of spatial expression. To Naranjo-Morse, it only made sense and could only be communicated to the

public in its complex entirety: “There’s been a lot of question about what is going on concerning this project. I think at this point it’s very important to start contextualizing it so the public is aware of the nuances. Because in the nuances is [...] the whole message, both the environment and ‘La Jornada’” (DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999).

However, the artists’ approaches and perspectives on their complex assignment had remained rather steady throughout the controversy: While Naranjo-Morse had consistently devoted herself to dynamizing the representation of different cultures in the process of historical exchange (DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999), Rivera and Sabo felt affirmed rather than challenged in their respective visions of the conquistador’s and settlers ‘contributions.’ Despite its division into an abstract and a figural section, Rivera opined that as a result of the discussion the memorial “[was] going to be for everybody concerned. It’s going to be for the Native Americans as well as the Spanish, a kind of an understanding” (qtd. in DellaFlora 13 Nov. 1999). For Sabo, the memorial spoke of the unique cultural integrity of the Southwest and its historical continuity that affirmed her leanings toward Southwestern Exceptionalism and Hispanophilia:

Hispanic people are wonderful. That’s what makes this state so wonderful, the fact that they came and they did this and they’ve been here ever since. But the wonderfulness of it is that they’ve kept their culture intact. No place else in the country have kept their culture intact like they have here, and the same with the Native Americans. Their cultures are theirs. They’ve intermarried and they’ve done all these things, but they’re still theirs. (qtd. in DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999).

I.6 2000: TOWARDS RESOLUTION

The milestone reached with the public presentation of the *La Jornada/Numbe Whageh* design would still not lead directly to building the memorial. Apparently, no gremium wanted to assume final responsibility in deciding the controversial issue (cf. Potts 27 Jan. 2000).²⁶¹ Between December 1999 and March 2000, Oñate proponents tried to revive the controversy because Native American lobbyists persistently rejected a representation of Oñate representation in the piece (cf. Potts 27 Jan. 2000) and because further commentary had de-emphasized Oñate as “but a waypoint” in the history of New Mexico.²⁶² As Hispanics insisted

²⁶¹ Allegedly in order to give the public time for additional comment, members of the city council and the different committees moved the proposal to the Land Use, Planning and Zoning department. However, the department returned the proposal to the city council without recommendation.

²⁶² Hume 2 Jan. 2000. While Oñate biographer Simmons had heretofore insisted on referring to the 1598 arrival of Oñate’s expedition as the “defining moment in our history” (Linthicum 12 Apr. 1998; “Arts Board Scuttles” 12 Feb. 1999) without any reference to ensuing processes of culture change, the comment by Hume framed Oñate in the context of culture change wrought by patterns of human migration and thus toned down what he had

on their precedence, they cemented the bipolarization of Oñate commemoration in emphasizing the conflict between Native American and Hispanic perspectives, as an exchange between Santillanes and Chicano activist Arturo Sandoval reveals: “We want people to know that we were here first, not the Pilgrims. We brought a whole different way of life.” – “The Native Americans were here first, Millie” (qtd. in Potts 27 Jan. 2000). Yet the controversy had taxed the energies of the discussants who anticipated a resolution of the matter (Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000; DellaFlora 24 Feb. 2000).

In March 2000, the City Council decreed in a resolution that the project should be realized in a different location and with a set framework for funding. According to the text of the resolution, the design was to reflect “entry of Spanish settlers into New Mexico” from a multicultural perspective and account “as comprehensively and accurately as possible” for the New Mexican past (City of Albuquerque Mar. 2000; cf. also DellaFlora 7 Mar. 2000). In accordance with the resolution, the planned memorial was moved from Tiguex Park to the more neutral grounds of the Albuquerque Museum (Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000; Fig. 18- aerial view).²⁶³ Owing to an expansion of the Albuquerque Museum and its sculpture garden, the project was stalled for several more years (DellaFlora 1 Dec. 2002). The postponement enabled factions to relent in their respective stances, and subsequently the activity and attention of more radical proponents and opponents of the original project shifted to other targets, such as the proposed monument in El Paso or the Albuquerque Tricentennial (cf. Carrico 18 Feb. 2003; Chino 10 July 2005; Norrell 24 June 2005). The memorial was begun in late 2004 with Naranjo-Morse’s *Numbe Whageh* and completed in fall 2005 with the erection of *La Jornada*. Dedication was planned on the occasion of the city of Albuquerque’s Tricentennial in 2006.²⁶⁴

Considering the ultimate realization of the design where the interactive dimension is lost as the settlers by-pass *Numbe Whageh*, heading straight for the rocket placed in front of the National Atomic Museum, one is tempted to read the *Cuartocentenario* as a perpetuation rather than transcendence of the tri-ethnic mythology. Read separately of each other, Naranjo-Morse’s perspective clearly presents the vanguard of multicultural perspectives rather than the foundation for a pluralist vision, while the combined Anglo and Hispanic perspectives perpetuate dated imaginations of the frontier past of New Mexico. The bi-polarization of memory that is reflected in the split of the project into a Native American and a non-Native

considered an “almost apocalyptic significance [of the *entrada*] in the popular 1999 understanding”; Hume 2 Jan. 2000.

²⁶³ One councilor favored the location at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, most others opted for the Albuquerque Museum; cf. Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000.

²⁶⁴ The prospect of completion intensified memories of the controversy and revived activism; Norrell 25 Apr. 2005; Norrell 24 June 2005; Chino 10 July 2005; Grothus 22 Oct. 2005; Griego 7 Nov. 2005.

American part mirrors a social dichotomy and reconfirms the existence of ethnic boundaries which the calls for 'reconciliation' and 'healing' that were uttered during the Oñate controversy intended to dissolve.

II POSITIONING HISTORY AND MEMORY IN ALBUQUERQUE: BETWEEN OLD TOWN AND BARRIO

In a retrospective assessment of the Oñate controversy and its significance for Albuquerque and new Mexico, Chicano activist Arturo Sandoval devoted a dedicated speech entitled *Tierra Sagrada* to the concept of *la querencia*. He passionately argued for the formative power of place on the personality, appealing to New Mexicans to overcome division and instead develop a common vision of their homeland as a special, even sacred place (Sandoval 30 Apr. 2004). Although set in an urban context, the *Cuartocentenario* at the Albuquerque Museum invokes such hallowed ground, consecrated by and consecrating memories of a conflictual, contradictory past.

Albuquerque is the largest city in New Mexico and has taken on many central functions that are usually ascribed to a state capital (cf. Dürr 2003: 183; Mattivi-Morley 1999). Aside from institutions like the Albuquerque Museum, the Museum for Natural History and the National Atomic Museum that immediately frame the originally proposed site for the Oñate project, the city also hosts the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (est. 1976) and the National Hispanic Culture Center (1998). The presence of the rather conventional, but still symbolic institutional sites of memory within the urban space of Albuquerque already indicate the complicated commemorative balance that needed to be weighed in planning and placing the *Cuartocentenario*. The project coincided with the establishment of the National Hispanic Culture Center in the *barrio* of Baretas (Shepherd Nov. 2001; Steinberg 10 Apr. 2005), and the struggle for control over public space as well as the urgency of the competition for expression of cultural identity in public space can at least partly be attributed to this realignment of the intra-urban network of sites of memory.

The location that was originally suggested for the proposed Oñate statue in 1997 was Tiguex Park, adjacent to Old Town and the Albuquerque Museum as well as just across the street from several other museums (see Fig. 13).²⁶⁵ The park is named for an extinct Native

²⁶⁵ Several 'prehistories' also suggest alternative locations made in the first proposal, including Old Town (Gonzales, June-Friesen) and Civic Plaza (Brooke 9 Feb. 1998). Retrospectively, Santillanes confirmed Tiguex Park as the "place where originally it was going to go"; personal interview 12 Oct. 2005. The local press reported Tiguex Park as the designated location throughout the decision-making process; cf. Reed 5 Feb. 1998; Reed 24 Feb. 1998; Naranjo-Morse 24 Feb. 1998; "Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists" 25 Feb. 1998; "Colonization Monument" 11 Feb. 1999; Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999. Judging from Letters to the Editor and from the

American group and was “set aside to honor Pueblo Indians.”²⁶⁶ It serves the community both for recreational purposes, open air festivals and markets as well as for political rallies, and thus represents a truly shared public space for civic participation. Irrespective of the ongoing dispute and the crisis of March 1999, the location in Tiguex Park was maintained for the *Cuartocentenario* throughout the revisions of the design process.²⁶⁷ Criticism up to that point had focused on the statue and historical figure of Oñate rather than on the spatial relationship established between the memorial and its site. Location only became an object of public contestation after the decision to include the figure of Oñate in the memorial was definite.²⁶⁸ When it became clear that the figure of Oñate would be part of the final design, the proposed location of the memorial intensified tensions among the different factions. Subsequently it was decided in early 2000 to place the *Cuartocentenario* within the Albuquerque Museum block, on “more neutral ground.”²⁶⁹ Shifting the commemorative project from a public park to the institutional space of the museum grounds relieved a good portion of the tension over that had built around location. Nevertheless, the contestation demonstrates how extremely symbolically charged the urban space of Albuquerque has become, not just for the city itself, but for the state and, as some protesters claim, the nation.

The urban spaces of Albuquerque were already charged with various memories before the *Cuartocentenario* was to be added to that overall space as a site of memory. Old Town had become a rallying ground for the preservation of Hispanic identity (and ‘Spanish heritage’) since the historic preservation movement began to reinvent the historic core of the city in order to provide a civic identity for Albuquerque in the 1960s, a spatial revaluation that

fact that activists used the proposed location for protest rallies, it appears that in public opinion both statue and site were understood as definite; cf. Sanchez 19 Mar. 1999; Zion 19 May 1999; Gibbs 28 July 1999; DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999; Potts 27 Jan. 2000; Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000.

²⁶⁶ Throughout the planning process, the evidently Pueblo Indian name had been taken for granted and the specific character of the location and its spatial context were not discussed. Yet when relocation became an issue in early 2000, the implications of the originally chosen location received closer attention. Gallegos emphasized that the park had been intentionally given an Indian name to honor Native Americans (7 Mar. 2000), and DellaFlora pointed out that the park was named for an extinct group of the Albuquerque area (7 Mar. 2000). When human rights had been introduced to the controversy, Native American activist James Zion (19 May 1999) pointed to the recognition implied in the park location, secunded by Gonzales & Rodriguez 22 Oct. 1999. Cf. also City of Albuquerque Mar. 2000; Domrzalski 16-22 Mar. 2000; Dürr 2003: 190.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999; DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999; Potts 27 Jan. 2000; Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000.

²⁶⁸ Voices critical of the statue rather than the location as an “insult to American Indians” were mostly found in activist forums and critical commentary reporting on protest rallies; cf. “Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999; Smallwood 4 Mar. 1999. Still, few of these voices explicitly pointed to the problematic spatial relationship between an inclusion of Oñate in the memorial design and the proposed location; cf. Zion 19 May 1999; Gibbs 28 July 1999.

²⁶⁹ Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000. DellaFlora (24 Feb. 2000) was one of the first to break the news of relocation, pondered by councilor Alan Armijo even before it became official policy in the City Council Resolution of Mar. 2000; cf. DellaFlora 7 Mar. 2000; Domrzalski 16-22 Mar. 2000.

strongly suggests roots in the Pueblo Revival that had transformed Santa Fe during the previous decades (cf. Mattivi-Morley 1999). The ethnic and social tensions that underlie the Oñate controversy can be mapped in the spatial tension between Hispanic Old Town with its picturesque plaza and church and Anglo New Town, established after the arrival of the railroad in the late nineteenth century and soon taking over central political and economic functions for the area (Mattivi-Morley 1999: 160; Dürr 2003: 181-82; Sanchez 10 Apr. 2005). Additional tension developed between the reinvented, gentrified Old Town and the working class neighborhoods of *barrios* like Barelás or Martíneztown.

The presence of the different museums around Tiguex Park, of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and the creation of the National Hispanic Culture Center, as well as plans to revitalize parts of the city by reference to the *Camino Real* reflect a heightened sensibility for spatial issues and the value attached to place. Discussion thus not merely revolved around the memories conjured by the location of the designed memorial, but rather concerned the superimposition of spatial imaginations at the intended park location that the *Cuartocentenario* implied. Relocation mitigated such concerns as the institutional space operated in a different spatial category. In 2000, the Albuquerque Museum could still be considered “more neutral ground” with regard to Oñate commemoration.

Linking the *Cuartocentenario* with the commemorative institution represented by the Albuquerque Museum was welcomed by advocates of Oñate as a strengthening of local concerns with the Hispanic past and present articulations of identity. As Mattivi-Morley argues, the Hispanic community of Old Town has developed and maintained a particular identity within Albuquerque (1999: 170). By virtue of the relocation, Old Town Hispanics could then also claim part of the inherently Anglo institution of the Albuquerque Museum for their interests.²⁷⁰ They also preferred the decidedly local, community-oriented context of Old Town over association with a national institution devoted to Hispanic culture and therefore decided against a relocation to the grounds of the NHCC as proposed by councilor Greg Payne (Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000; Santillanes, personal interview 12 Oct. 2005). The proximity of the museum to the well-developed tourist space and civic area of Old Town offered the visibility and respectability that Millie Santillanes, principal proponent of a monument to Oñate, desired for the *Cuartocentenario* and which in her opinion the Chicano neighborhood of Barelás where the NHCC is located could not provide (Shepherd Nov. 2001; Steinberg 10 Apr. 2005). Thus, in addition to the interethnic implications of the site that had informed the Oñate controversy, the social dynamic within the Hispanic community of Albuquerque

²⁷⁰ Santillanes was so delighted about the change of location (cf. DellaFlora 7 Mar. 2000) that she even claimed it as her idea; cf. Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000. For the persistent symbolic significance of Old Town to Hispanic identity cf. Sanchez 10 Apr. 2005; also Mattivi-Morley 1999.

became spatially manifest in the debate about the location for the *Cuartocentenario*. Unwilling to give up symbolic territory and cede control over space, Oñate advocates turned the issue of location (in addition to the controversy over Oñate) into a struggle over memory, identity and space.

II.2 COLLIDING CONCEPTS OF SPACE

The struggle entered the *Cuartocentenario* design in the particular ways that each section reflects spatial conceptualizations regarding past and present New Mexico (cf. I.5 “1999: Design Compromise”). The bipolarity of ethnic memories is reflected in the division of the project into the Native American ‘environment’ that privileges circularity and centeredness, emphasizing place, and the Hispanic-Anglo representation that reflects linearity and dispersion, evoking space. While in Naranjo-Morse’s rendition of the spatial imagination centripetal movement toward a place of emergence set within a sacred space suggests the processes that enable people to experience place and establish relations to it (sense of place), Rivera and Sabo indicate a centrifugal movement where space forms both an object of desire and an obstacle between individuals and their goals. While Naranjo-Morse reflects on how the origins of culture and history are symbolically emplaced and how place can stabilize a sense of self, Rivera and Sabo’s interpretation demonstrates placelessness in that they show space as an alienating environment where origins and meaning are always placed ‘somewhere else.’ The difference in spatial conceptualization is most strongly expressed in Naranjo-Morse’s notion of a “blessed space” and the effects such a space assumes for individuals and groups: “I know that sounds really very idealistic (laughs) on some levels but I think that’s the interpretation I get as a Native American now [...] that these spaces could be blessed and be a place where you could come and heal. [...] And so that space had to be non-linear and so it had to be... – this, because this is where we come from” (personal interview, 14 Oct. 2005). In contrast, both Rivera and Sabo insisted on temporal parameters to approach the significance of Oñate’s venture and thus in their representation were limited to time-worn spatial images like the *Camino Real* or the tri-ethnic ‘Land of Enchantment’ that rest on the notion of difference and rely on strategies of boundary drawing and exclusion. The precarious situation of individuals in such an environment is underscored by the urge to provide educational explanations not just for the representation itself, but even more so for the past experience it indexes.

Thus read in juxtaposition, the *Cuartocentenario* affirms preconceived ideas about the spatial sensibilities of Native and non-Native groups and recreates ethnic and cultural boundaries; it emerges, as Kathy Freise observes, as “a piece that enforces separateness more

than it intends to” (2003: 107). Replacing the element of the *acequia* by a wall of names further underscores the separate visions that divide the site. In the urban context of Albuquerque even the Hispanic connection to the land – *la querencia* – has become a memory. It was invoked by Santillanes in an interview when she spoke about how her grandparents still tended to livestock and irrigated fields, but it no longer relates to, let alone constitutes a lived reality. The removal of place attachment from experience to symbolic representation sets the project in Albuquerque (and the one in El Paso) apart from the land-based vision that informed the Oñate controversy and commemoration in northern New Mexico. At the same time, the clarity with which the dichotomies confront each other in the *Cuartocentenario* as well as its symbolic richness open a new field for interpretation, as Freise reflects:

I am drawn to think about the ways in which a monument holds possibilities for rethinking the political and cultural positions that a piece may appear to claim. Such a capacity will help the Oñate monument move beyond what I think the figurative segment of this piece, in particular, is based upon: Myth, nationalism, glorification. [...] But some aspects of such public art pieces – here I am thinking specifically of the landscape treatment that is part of the Oñate memorial – can reshape territories and borders. It can tell stories not just of 400 years ago, but stories that lead into the future. (2003: 101)

Numbe Whageh and *La Jornada* present antithetical statements about the landscapes of memory that constitute the symbolic space of New Mexico, indicating that an overarching spatial imagination of the region and a concomitant sense of self are in the process of reformulation. As sites/a site of memory, the project and its parts creatively engage history and memory in face of the dissolution of one pre-established ideology about New Mexican identity in favor of a new sense of regional self as of yet not clearly defined (cf. Freise 2003: 82). They suggest a weakening of Anglo cultural hegemony that contained New Mexican identities in the myth of tri-ethnic harmony and located them separately in the Pueblo, the *Hispano* homeland and Spanish Revival towns, and in Anglo urbanity. Hispanics aspire to fill the void left by Anglo interpretive authority and struggle to attain the symbolic presence and spatial representation that they feel corresponds to their social and historical presence.

It is this conversation between past, present and future that I have termed ‘trialogue.’ As a discourse, it is a regional conversation about memory, place, and identity for different groups in a multiethnic state that seeks to resolve issues of national importance. As a concept, it is indebted to dialectical approaches and seeks not only to explain present cultural predicaments, such as the conflict over commemoration, by reaching back to their historic origins and revealing their present motivations but by projecting the empirically observable oppositions and contradictions in alternative abstractions. As a scenario, it suggests the

dissolution of established boundaries and offers avenues to remapping the terrain of memory in new, potentially less contestatory ways. Read as trialogue, a site of memory such as the *Cuartocentenario* that is both expressive of a particular contemporary moment and signals the need to face an open future (cf. Freise 2003: 107) can function as a “bridge between what is remembered and what will be” (81).

III SEEKING THE TRIALOGIC:

THE ENDS OF (NOT) COMMEMORATING OÑATE

The Cuarto Centenario [...] has passed, but the nature of a planned memorial is still not resolved. As a serious student of history, I favor a memorial which will depict the many positive aspects of 400 years of mainly peaceful coexistence. Both historical recriminations and overweening pride are counterproductive and mainly cause division. As a country of varying historical traditions, it is only by respecting each other's heritage that we will achieve the harmony essential to a multi-ethnic society.

(Encinias *AJ* 23 May 1999)

While ostensibly concerned with the historic figure of Juan de Oñate and the beginning of Spanish colonization in New Mexico, the Oñate controversy and the *Cuartocentenario* touch central issues in memory studies. The following chapter analyzes the ways in which people in Albuquerque have put historical facts to use in the present (cf. Agoyo in DellaFlora 9 Aug. 1998). The controversy raging between 1998 and 2005 underscores the need to find appropriate contemporary interpretations and thence suitable representations for past events, and it indeed provides “an enlightening lesson in the vagaries of history and its interpretation over time” (“Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists” 25 Feb. 1998).²⁷¹ The conflict over memorial practices revolving around Juan de Oñate as a figure and a symbol had become severely divisive of the urban community of Albuquerque: Proponents of a monument argued bitterly with supporters of a memorial; the former faction emphasized their continuity with a glorious past and a distinctly Hispanic heritage, the latter faction called for a comprehensive historical account and for reconciliation between ethnic groups. Based on unspoken assumptions that seem to contradict their argumentation, monument proponents based their claims on a perspective that saw “history as fact” – aiming for recognition of their ancestors’ contributions – while memorial supporters emphasized the “past as process” – aiming for a continued unification of the community. Central to the monument faction was the issue of

²⁷¹ Cf. also DellaFlora “Oñate Statue Triggers”; Wilson 12 Apr. 1998; DellaFlora 9 Aug. 1998.

Hispanic New Mexican identity that was anxiously defended against notions of *mestizaje* as well as practices of Anglo cultural hegemony. For the proponents of a memorial, the persistence of Native American cultures and the history of cultural exchange and mixing were to take center stage.

Chicano columnists Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez have observed the controversy and similar debates throughout the Southwest in a comparative perspective that ranges from the Columbus Quincentennial of 1992 to protests during the Columbus Day celebrations of October 2000 and covers territory from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to Denver, Colorado. Pointing to the implications of such conflicts for the community and for collective memory they provide a larger context for the Oñate controversy in Albuquerque and in New Mexico. To them, the heated struggle resembles “a guerilla style war” waged over contentious contemporary issues: “The war is not actually about this region, nor the past. It’s about how society constructs cultural and racial identity, how people interpret history differently, and how we choose to honor memory” (Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998). The relationship between minority and national identities – how people see and treat themselves and others (Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999) – emerges as one of the contested notions implicit in the ‘trialogue’ about Oñate.²⁷² The spontaneous impulse that sparked the debate in Albuquerque was for a number of Hispanics to celebrate themselves with a monument and an anniversary and exclude most other groups in the city and the state from creative and conceptual participation in the celebration. The immediate reaction of the excluded groups was to reject a commemoration that symbolically repeated the act of conquest of 1598 and to call for the healing of historical injuries to the community.

III.1 PERSONAL CRUSADES FOR SPANISH HERITAGE

A further aspect that complicated the controversy about Oñate in Albuquerque was the intermingling of private and public visions of the past. Beside don Juan de Oñate, the single most instrumental figure in the debate was the late Millie Santillanes. The initial proposal was informed by her commitment to Spanish pride, an agenda that had led to her involvement in heritage-based and genealogical organizations some of which she established herself.²⁷³ She

²⁷² Cf. Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999. They repeatedly return to the Oñate controversy as a site of memory in its own right: “This impassioned debate is not about the past, but rather about how we honor memory and what we remember”; Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999. At the same time, they ponder the constitution of subjectivity and society through past events: “This conflict is about memory, how we choose to remember and where we position ourselves in history”; Gonzales & Rodriguez 13 Oct. 2000.

²⁷³ cf. Rolwing 17 May 1998; Dingman 10 Apr. 2005; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; Freise 2003; Gonzales 2005. Santillanes was instrumental in establishing the New Mexico Hispanic Culture Preservation League (NM HCPL, formerly Hispanic Anti-Defamation League), a Hispanic advocacy group lobbying for awareness of Hispanic

has unremittingly lobbied a specifically New Mexican Hispanic identity and promoted New Mexico's Spanish heritage, mainly with a focus on educational concerns. Her campaign for Hispanic identity constructed 'Spanish heritage' to the exclusion of other ethnic and social groups in the state – and, by extension, in the nation as well – and was built on and most vocally expressed in demands for an unmitigated right of Hispanics to their own history. In her ambition as well as in rhetoric and ideological orientation, Santillanes' strategies are reminiscent of Houser's monologic approach to commemorating Onate. She rejected any hint of revisionism and did not provide for any form of dialogue: "We as Hispanics, because of the reality of the times, must now be denied what is part of our history? [...] We, as Hispanics, want to bring forward the fact that we came here 400 years ago. Acoma has no business in our memorial" (qtd. in DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998).

Her exclusive agenda was prefigured in a Quincentennial press release that deliberately emphasized and highlighted solely the "development" and "evolution" of Hispanic culture.²⁷⁴ Santillanes aimed at reinstating a Hispanic identity apart from notions of cultural exchange and mixing, in clear opposition to the kind of Hispanic identity that the Chicano movement had propagated: "We don't deny that in varying degrees we must all have some Indian blood, but that is not our culture ... Never, never, never did our families tell us that culturally we were Indian" (qtd. in Armas 24 Feb. 1998).²⁷⁵ She discounted any evidence of cultural interaction and mutual exchange as irrelevant to her cause, thus revealing the politics that inform her personal agenda: "This 400th anniversary is not about diversity or about inclusion or about being politically correct. It is to mark the arrival of Don Juan de

history in the public and in education under its motto *Verdad y Orgullo* (Truth and Pride), but criticized by other Hispanics, by multiracial organizations and by the Jewish Anti-Defamation League of New Mexico for its exclusionist politics and for styling themselves as "the conquistadores of the 21st century" (Erwin Rivera, member of Catholic Church's *Cuartocentenario* committee, qtd. in Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998).

²⁷⁴ "La Hispanidad: 500 Years of the American Experience, 1492-1992." The use of possessive pronouns ("approaching Quincentenary of *our* country," "greater understanding and appreciation of *our* culture," "We invite everyone to come and join us in this commemoration of *our* Quincentennial year...") excluded the presence of other cultural entities that might have (co-)existed throughout and contributed to "500 years of the American Experience." Santillanes's proprietary vision of the past also carried over to the CCP; cf. personal interview 12 Oct. 2005. While understanding, mutual appreciation and uniting the community are put forth as the alleged goals of the Quincentennial, she claims the occasion exclusively for her agenda as "the Year of the Hispanic." As in the *Cuartocentenario* of 1998, community and general public remain culturally undefined, faceless despite the reference to participants (Aztec Dancers), performances (Matachines) and places (Kiva Auditorium, Taos) that clearly connote the presence of Native American cultures and cultural mixing, not just in the state of New Mexico, but also in the celebrations.

²⁷⁵ Santillanes charged Armas with lack of historical insight, failure to understand New Mexican Hispanic identity, and an "obsession for destroying our Hispanic New Mexico culture" for his column promoting an inclusive celebration of the *Cuartocentenario* as the combined stories of Indians, Spanish, and *mestizos* in "an interwoven epic that demands to be told"; Armas 24 Feb. 1998. Armas had apparently irritated Santillanes by tracing her elitist attitude and exclusive identity concept to the old intricate *casta* system that classified and stratified the Hispanic population based on degrees of racial intermixing.

Oñate and his 500 colonizers” (qtd. in Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998). Adopting the guise of pragmatic idealism, Santillanes claimed: “We see Juan de Oñate as the one who brought us here [...] We wanted our [the Spanish] contributions known – the positive things we brought. That’s all. We thought it was a simple concept” (Reed 5 Feb. 1998). Yet the alleged conceptual simplicity contained a powerful subtext, hidden by the accusation of political correctness. Implied in that accusation is a perception of Hispanics being deliberately slighted by liberal politics:

What has happened here is that the Hispanic culture has been denied an expression of what is important to them for the sake of political correctness [...] We have been denied what we asked for [...] It was never meant to be a piece of art representing two cultures. It was only a commemoration to the 400th anniversary when Don Juan de Oñate arrived here. (“Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999).

Contradicting her claims to historical veracity and accuracy that she enlisted for educational purposes, Santillanes declared historical evidence a matter of perspective: “There was no benevolent conqueror in our entire history. Are we going to be devoid of history to be politically correct?” (Rolwing 17 May 1998) Likewise, she revealed partial amnesia and creative eclecticism where the historical record is concerned: “Who is going to cast the first stone? Let us have some illusions [...] Let us honor the people for their good deeds and forgive them for their trespasses” (DellaFlora “Oñate Statue Triggers”). In her argumentation, the historic figure of Oñate is naturalized rather than rationalized as a leading character in the colonization, a move that only weakly disguises its political implications: “The settlers didn’t come here without a leader and not to acknowledge [Oñate] is wrong. We’re not canonizing him. We’re not declaring him a hero. We’re only marking a moment in history” (Rolwing 17 May 1998). Operating with the categories of wrong and right behavior, Santillanes framed commemoration in moral terms and naturalized the course of history in an explosive concoction of moral principles and cultural politics.

Throughout the controversy, Santillanes strategically juggled rhetorics and paradigms in order to move closer to her one set goal: a representation of Oñate in the public space of Albuquerque. The first proposal was presented as a wish for recognition, using the figure of Oñate to metonymically and metaphorically acknowledge the Hispanic contributions to New Mexican history. When the controversy began to address Oñate’s ambivalence, Santillanes reacted by steering a confrontational course for a while, engaging a fight for equal representation of Hispanic history. Realizing that antagonizing led to an impasse, she adopted the argument of hurt from the Native American side at the height of the crisis.²⁷⁶ Yet once the

²⁷⁶ When downscaling the presence of Oñate in the project design was first considered, Santillanes hurled a warning at Oñate opponents: “If you want hell, we can give you hell in public meetings. We can be as mean and

design had been successfully presented to the public, she redirected her concern at the practicalities of implementing the project proper.²⁷⁷ Five years and a change in city administration later, Santillanes eventually made an appearance as a cultural pluralist: “When the Spanish came, the Native Americans were already here. Those cultures had to learn to co-exist, as did Mexicans who came to live here. [...] We were still the same people culturally — Spanish and Native Americans and Mexicans and combinations thereof” (Dingman 10 Apr. 2005). Santillanes emerges as a cultural broker well aware of the predicaments of minority history in a majority-dominated society and intent on strategically situating her concerns in the public sphere of American society. Therefore, a monument to Spanish colonization needed to be erected in the public space of Albuquerque.

Agenda-oriented lobbying was also at the heart and in the minds of Oñate proponents who rallied around the well-connected advocate of an exclusivist agenda in a Hispanic-only CCP. More aggressive formulations of the exclusive program of the Spanish heritage movement can be found in Letters to the Editor and in forums of advocacy groups. Despite their tone, they mostly express anxiety and defensiveness about the future of Hispanic culture in New Mexico with regard to its treatment in the past, finding an anti-Hispanic bias informed by the Black Legend especially in Anglo-dominated historiography.²⁷⁸ Also, they indicate a keen awareness of the symbolism of public space and the implications of one group’s presence or absence within that context: “[...] but the opposition to the Memorial goes much deeper. The intent is to deny Spanish New Mexicans a public presence” (“Preface” 24 Feb. 2000). Insinuating a history of displacement by the United States, ardent Oñate proponent Luis Brandtner elaborated on the argument: “It is delusional to believe that you can deprive

hurtful as you guys are”; Reed 5 Feb. 1998. After ironically thanking 400PPC members for their work in meetings since October 1998, she added: “[But] some of us have been working for five years, with a different vision, one discarded by the arts board [...] We want our Juan Oñate honored. I really appreciate what you did, but this process has been very hurtful to us”; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999.

²⁷⁷ When the compromise design was publicly displayed, Santillanes commended the portrayal of the settlers (!) as “magnificent. We would be the pride of the Southwest with this memorial.” At the same time and with regard to the tremendous cost that might eventually jeopardize the whole project, however, she dealt another blow at her critics: “[...] a request for a simple bust that would have cost less than \$100,000 has mushroomed, so that we can be politically correct, to \$550,000 [...] the proponents of the statue didn’t make it mushroom [...] We asked for something very simple”; DellaFlora 14 Dec. 1999.

²⁷⁸ Luis Brandtner (13 Feb. 2000) paradigmatically expressed the sentiment of besiegedness, leashing out against all “others” in New Mexico: “Arrayed against the Spanish Americans of New Mexico is a disparate ‘multi-cultural’ coalition of Pueblo Indians, racist Anglo-Saxons, homosexual activists, Jews, Chicanos and Indo-Hispanos bound together by a shared hatred of everything straight, Spanish and European.” Gene Hill spoke for the perspective informing NMHCPL: “Hispanic culture is constantly under attack all over this country for the past 20-30 years. [...] To honor this man is long overdue”; qtd. in Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999. The feeling of an anti-Hispanic bias and a perceived lack of research into Hispanic history was also expressed in various Letters to the Editor; cf. Sanchez 19 Mar. 1999; Lujan 8-14 Apr. 1999; Lujan 16-22 Mar. 2000. Albuquerque resident Michael Sanchez’s opinion may be taken as a summary statement for the attitude: “To not build this memorial is to deny Hispanics their place in history”; qtd. in Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000.

Spanish New Mexicans of a symbolic presence in the public square of political and cultural discourse in a state and in a city that their ancestors founded and named and then lost by historical circumstance and force of arms” (15 Apr. 1999).²⁷⁹ With regard to cultural prestige, supporters complained about a pro-Indian bias that slighted Hispanic heritage and cultural production. This position did not refrain from disregarding sensitivities existing within the community in defense of Hispanics’ historical concerns: “The more we give in, the more they want. [...] It started out as a commemoration. Then it became a reconciliation. And now nothing less than the elimination of Oñate will please the Indians” (Brandtner qtd. in Reed 5 Feb. 1998). The defensiveness of the Oñate proponents culminated in suspicions of conspiracy, explaining the controversy as a resulting of “interference from outsiders and radicals” and accusing the CCC and Arts Board of siding “with radicals who are trying their best to divide us” (Sanchez 19 Mar. 1999).²⁸⁰

As witnessed in the more radical statements during the Oñate controversy, Santillanes’s Hispanic-only politics relied on the realities of exclusion and turned them into strategy. Even if she seemed to have relented in her stance, Santillanes’s fundamental assumption of separate cultural entities and ethnic identities in New Mexico remained constant. As witnessed in critical Letters to the Editor, the strategy did not go unnoticed in the public: Despite claims to inclusivity, “the statue is only of Oñate and his Spanish settlers. There is nothing about the statue that celebrates anyone but the Spanish” (Yu 19 Mar. 1999). Roberto Chene, one of the professional mediators hired by the Arts Board, offered the issue of exclusion as one of the fundamental reasons that kept the opposing camps from reaching common ground. Excluding not just the history of the colonized indigenous population, but also the subsequent history of racial and cultural mixing amounted to a silencing of the memories and voices of the present-day *mestizo* population and abrogated them their share in

²⁷⁹ To him, acknowledging Hispanic history assumes existential significance for regional and national identity: “The fight over a memorial statue to founding governor don Juan de Oñate is a fight for the soul of New Mexico, and by extension, for the soul of America. [...] How is it possible to have a NM without a symbolic place in it for the descendants of its founders and first settlers? [...] You cannot kill a founding people in your midst without killing yourselves”; Brandtner 15 Apr. 1999.

²⁸⁰ Contributing to the crisis of March 1999, Oñate proponents questioned the legitimacy of the 13-member 400PPC brought on by the Arts Board as additional support in the design process, claiming bias of the Arts Board in selecting committee members. They also called the commitment of committee members into question, citing their not being taxpaying Albuquerque residents, or found them incapable of independent judgment for reasons of their being City of Albuquerque employees. The irony in those allegations lies in the fact that they come from dissenting 400PPC members who had held functions in the NM HCPL and were involved with other heritage organizations as well. Also, the accusations were not made openly, but in Letters of Disagreement. Ironically, the ‘conspiracy theorists’ discounted insistence on an encompassing historical account on the side of Oñate opponents as lack of historical knowledge and resistance to improved education. The maneuver suggests, however, that as the project did not come through with the result desired by Oñate proponents, they declared the design process flawed and thus the result invalid; Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999.

the creation of present-day New Mexico.²⁸¹ Yet critics discounted the exclusionist position as a quixotic fight for Spanish ancestry that had never actually existed in that form (cf. Drushella 24 Feb. 1998) and called attention to the implications of a conflict between minorities in a majority-dominated society (Martinez 25-26 Feb. 1998).

III.2 THE STAKES OF IDENTITY

Given Santillanes's affiliation with the New Mexico Hispanic Genealogical Society and the conservative New Mexico Hispanic Culture Preservation League (NMHCPL), her massive agenda of protecting the Hispanic cultural heritage becomes complicit of a segregational, divisive concept of cultural and ethnic identity. As Sarah Horton observed, it can thus be contextualized with studies of ethnic nationalism.²⁸² Even if Santillanes abstained from the outright hostility expressed by the more radical voices in her camp, her segregational rhetoric must raise concern given the socio-economic and political stakes in New Mexico, a state that takes pride in its cultural pluralism and capitalizes on the image of tri-ethnic harmony. It may be a feeling of besiegedness that motivated Hispanics in New Mexico to hoist Oñate as the symbolic hero in their crusade for better attention to Hispanic issues and concerns. The recourse to a separate but equal-rhetoric in their agenda however, ought to be taken serious,

²⁸¹ “[...] underlying all the contentiousness and conflict (in the Oñate controversy) is the reality of exclusion”; Chene qtd. in Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999. Rodriguez & Gonzales (8 Apr. 1998) concurred, pointing to the exclusivist attitude displayed by the Oñate proponents. Civil rights leader Vicente Ximenes came forward to condemn an exclusionary celebration that ignored and even negated the existence of a *mestizo* population and culture. He argued that different historical perspectives should not divide a community that over the centuries had struggled together, both quarreling and fighting and loving and intermarrying; cf. Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998; Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999.

²⁸² Horton 2002; cf. also Handler (1988) for the Quebecois in Canada, Girshik (2003) for Afrikaners and Zulu in post-Apartheid South Africa. Originally, ethnic nationalism referred to the ideology of an organic community consolidated and delineated by its common ancestry. Individual group members are linked by ancestry, guaranteeing self-esteem, a feeling of security and external recognition (Smith 1984). Recurring to foundational myths inculcates group solidarity, justifies claims to territory and location, and creates a particular, even exceptional identity often premised on the pureness of its foundation. However, Ignatieff (1993) expanded the concept and proposed that ethnic nationalism be juxtaposed with civic nationalism, with the latter replacing ancestry by the idea of a legal bond and a shared set of democratic values and procedures. Civic nationalism proclaims affiliation to a larger whole as voluntary and consent-based, and has an inclusive thrust. In contrast, ethnic nationalism uses its symbols, rituals, and patriotic organizations to exclusive ends. Appeals to tradition and heritage are meant to instill pride in a noble past, and ancestors become projection planes for desirable values. Yet what is more disturbing are attempts to discredit opposing viewpoints and to gloss over or even morally justify less than glorious behavior. Within a multiethnic framework, while civic nationalism would try to reconcile a nation with an often conflicted past, ethnic nationalism insists on its own side of the story, glosses policies of redress as leading to a balanced perspective and might allow for the coexistence of separate cultural minorities, but would resist attempts at fusing cultural identities as a weakening or even destruction of ethnic uniqueness. This form of identity construction seems to appeal especially to conservative ethnic elites (Girshick 2003). Taken these elements, I think it is justified to classify the strategies employed by Santillanes and other Oñate proponents as a form of ethnic nationalism.

especially as the NMHCPL targets education for its conservative form of memory and identity politics.

In the debate over the significance of memory and commemoration for the formulation of collective identities in New Mexico, ethnicity had become the most heavily contested issue. The *Cuartocentenario* demonstrated the dilemma of accommodationist Hispanic identity: Citing educational concerns, ethnic ‘Spanish’ memory was authenticated by primacy, descent, evidence, and symbolic re-enactment, this time in a sculptural form even more explicit in its claims than the statue at OMVC. In order to instill pride in one’s roots and to improve self-perception, heritage activists attempted to construct a “true blue-blooded” Spanish ancestry that tied Hispanic New Mexicans to the history of European civilization and inscribed them in the category of whiteness, thus legitimizing their claims to participation in mainstream American society. Hispanic heritage activists tried to control past and future in their vision of a particular, segregated history and a future pluralist society characterized by coexistence of social groups, rejecting criticism as hostile outside interference.²⁸³ The defensive position as well as the aggressive rhetoric directed against ethnic Others in the Oñate controversy originate in a social and cultural anxiety that results from a history of economic dispossession and political disempowerment of Hispanic elites under U.S. rule. Faced with the realities and experience of difference, Hispanic Oñate proponents express a desire to belong and blend with mainstream American society and thus fully partake in the material and ideological promises of ‘the American Dream.’

Santillanes’s identity politics seem all the more peculiar when compared to other concepts of ethnicity and cultural identity represented prominently in the controversy as well as in the anniversary celebrations. The identity debate as conducted by Oñate proponents intentionally confused ideological and biological affiliations, ancestry and descent, race and culture. Both historians and genealogists stand to verify that “although many Hispanic New Mexicans insist that they are of pure Spanish ancestry, the fact of the matter is that very few, if any, Hispanics, especially in New Mexico, can validly make this claim.” One does not need to be a genealogist to concur that “the overwhelming majority of Hispanics in New Mexico possess a degree of indigenous ancestry as well” (Septien 9-16 Sep. 1999). Even though colonial historian and deVargas specialist John Kessell defends the physical continuity of Oñate’s legacy, most voices acknowledge the cultural diversity and ethnic mixing or *mestizaje*

²⁸³ Insinuations of disloyalty were complemented by allegations of infringement upon fundamental rights regarding “an inherent Spanish-American right – as with any racial or ethnic group – to freedom of artistic expression embracing issues of morality, ethics and faith as well as one’s own history and culture. The imposition of an alien design on an Oñate or Fourth Centennial Memorial gnaws away at the artistic and symbolic integrity of the Sabo/Rivera design and further erodes its acceptability, already compromised, as a Spanish-American cultural, historic and artistic expression”; Brandtner 22 Feb. 2000.

that had followed conquest.²⁸⁴ In a Letter to the Editor, Alberto Martinez (25-26 Feb. 1998) voiced public opinion when he subversively embraced programmatic statements on the *Cuartocentenario* which postulated that “Hispanic children need a better self-image and it starts with being able to take pride in their ancestors” to counter exclusion with “the beautiful blend of Hispanic cultures enriched by Moorish, Spanish and Indian bloodlines known as Mestizos. Mestizo is the correct term for those of Spanish-Indian blood and they make up the vast majority of today’s population.” Española *Cuartocentenario* committee member José Griego recurred to language, architectural forms and foodways, as well as to perspectives on space and the person to identify as mixed: “I’m Mestizo. We call ourselves ‘Spanish,’ but our culture is probably more Indian than Spanish in many ways. [...] Our values toward the land and respect for the individual draw from our Indian heritage” (Armas 24 Feb. 1998).²⁸⁵ Thomas Chavez, then director of the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, argued in favor of acknowledging coexistence and a shared humanity in the exceptional context of New Mexico: “We as human beings have cohabitated for 400 years and nowhere else in North America has that happened. People who do or don’t want a statue of Oñate, I think, have become so blinded over defending their ethnic position, they’re missing the bigger point” (Rolwing 17 May 1998) – a point also made central in the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations in general and reflected in public commentary with regard to the significance of the historic moment: “We represent a diverse range of peoples and cultures and thought [...] We want to honor our ancestors and that meeting [...] in 1598.”²⁸⁶ Given the pronounced endorsement of inclusivity and diversity on a variety of institutional levels, the attacks from the camp of heritage activists are all the more disturbing in their inflammatory rhetoric and strategic distortions of history

²⁸⁴ According to Kessel “[a] European legacy certainly came with Oñate and it’s a legacy that lives. [...] There really is a continuity. The bloodlines remain”; qtd. in Linthicum 12 Apr. 1998. Those who consider themselves descendants of the first colonists today claim ties to Spain based on language and Catholicism. However, historian Thomas Chavez pointed to the reality of *mestizaje* even upon arrival of the ‘Spanish’ conquistadors, given the circumstances of Oñate’s own family who had married a *mestizo* woman – Moctezuma’s granddaughter: “What was a Spaniard? There were more mixed bloods than purebloods. It would have been hard to have been more diverse”; qtd. in Linthicum 12 Apr. 1998.

²⁸⁵ Rio Arriba County Commissioner Moises Gonzales of Santa Clara Pueblo confirmed the statements that hold especially true for northern New Mexico, the heartland of first colonial Hispanic settlement: “Our family dates back to the Spanish settlement in New Mexico. We are Mestizos, and our Indian heritage is never in question. My grandma, Juanita, never identified with the Spanish. She speaks only Spanish, but she told us always ‘*Somos Mexicanos*’ (“We’re Mexican”). Mestizos have been part of our history from the start. Mestizos accompanied Oñate. Oñate’s wife was Indian, so his children were also mestizos. Mestizos are part of our New Mexico experience”; qtd. in Armas 24 Feb. 1998. As the quotes make evident, ethnicity is not just a matter of background, but also of deliberate self-designation.

²⁸⁶ 400PCC member Ron Martinez Looking Elk qtd. in Zoretich 18 Mar. 1999; cf. also Sandoval’s emphasis on ethnic diversity in Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999.

and indicate a branch of identity politics that moves beyond the New Mexican context, challenging foundational ideas of a culturally diverse American society.²⁸⁷

III.2.1 HISPANIC AGAINST PUEBLO?

Most reports and comments cast the Oñate controversy as a conflict between Hispanics and Native Americans (Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999), the colonizers and the colonized of 1598. Given the central subjects of contestation – Oñate and the Battle of Acoma – the split appears self-evident. Both figure and events have assumed a symbolic rather than substantive role and significance for present-day New Mexicans.²⁸⁸ The debate operated on the level of binary oppositions that framed Oñate as either the “father of New Mexico” or a “brutal conqueror” depicting him as an ineffective colonial administrator who tyrannically oppressed both the native population and his own settlers.²⁸⁹ Likewise, Acoma was debated as either a “legitimate war among equals or a vengeful massacre of the weak by the strong” (Linthicum 1 Feb. 1998). While historians agree that the punitive measures were intended to break resistance against the Spanish colonizers and to discourage maintenance of indigenous traditions, Oñate proponents in public debate defended the Battle of Acoma as justified by rule of war and as a defensive measure to protect the fledgling Spanish colony and their Indian allies against Acoma aggression.²⁹⁰ The binarism extends to perspectives on the *Cuartocentenario* in general: Where the self-declared descendants of the first settlers meant to celebrate Oñate as the political originator of “the first European colony in what would eventually become the United States,” Oñate critics dismiss Oñate commemoration as a

²⁸⁷ Luis Brandtner called the loudest for Hispanic-only approaches and a rejection of cultural diversity: “What [the public affirmation of roots and cultural heritage] does is expose the lie of the melting pot and its successor lie, the theory of multi-culturalism”; Brandtner 15 Apr. 1999. Diversity did not register at all well with the crusaders for *limpizaje de sangre* (purity of blood): “The pretense is that the descendents [sic] of the Spanish and Spanish American founders of New Mexico intermarried with the Indians and become [sic] mestizos. [...] They, too, trace their Spanish roots to the Founding Families but prefer to identify with their Indian ancestry. Indo-Hispano leaders have publicly spoken in opposition to a Memorial to their own Spanish ancestors”; “Preface” 24 Feb. 2000.

²⁸⁸ cf. Hume 2 Jan. 2000; even Luis Brandtner must concede that Oñate’s ambivalence “perfectly symbolizes Spanish New Mexico, the good and the bad”; Brandtner 15 Apr. 1999; emphasis mine.

²⁸⁹ cf. Reed 5 Feb. 1998; Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000; Rolwing 17 May 1998. As in the Columbus Quincentennial, Spanish conquest was remembered either as the arrival of founding fathers or as the arrival of oppressors (Gonzales & Rodriguez 13 Oct. 2000). In a similar vein, the image of Spanish conquistadors as the bringers of civilization was juxtaposed with their image as harbingers of destruction, slavery, and death; Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998.

²⁹⁰ Santilles qtd. in Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998; Domrzalski 25-31 Mar. 1999; Lujan 8-14 Apr. 1999. In Letters to the Editor, Acoma is characterized as an aggressive player in New Mexico history deserving of the punitive expedition; cf. Lujan 8-14 Apr. 1999; Sanchez 19 Mar. 1999. Lujan (8-14 Apr. 1999) retrospectively exonerated Oñate of his violent actions by pointing to the legal framework of retribution and trial after defeat.

gesture that affirms the act of subjugation of 1598.²⁹¹ Consequently, opposition to commemorating and representing Oñate in public space came from many Acoma Pueblos who considered his depiction offensive and insulting to Native Americans (Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000; DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998). They also criticized the exclusionist agenda pursued by proponents of the *Cuartocentenario* project.

The “collision of passion” between those who longed to celebrate their ancestry and those skeptical of “ancestor worship” (Rhodes 15 Mar. 1999) springs from the difficulty of accounting for the complex history of a diverse population. The challenge of an “accurate representation of history” lies in this complexity and in the potential demystification of revered figures (“Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists” 25 Feb. 1998). Exasperated with the futility of trying to construct a balanced account given the circumstances, Darva Chino, an Albuquerque resident of Acoma origin, summarized the sentiment of Oñate opponents: “At this moment, the issue conjures up a lot of anger and disappointment, that in this day and age, a group of intelligent, educated, community-minded people could actually allow a negative, destructive figure in New Mexico history to be honored and recognized” (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998). Still, the Oñate controversy bears witness to the democratizing of memorial practices, or what John Gillis called “the acknowledgement that everyone now deserves equal recognition *at all times* in wholly *accessible places*” (1994: 13, *emphases mine*).

Recontextualization, or “telling the truth about history” in the CCP, had thus become a concern of both proponents and opponents of Oñate. Based on the notion that only a ‘truthful’ representation of the conflicted past would serve the purpose of affirming a positive group image and lead to enduring identification, participants in the debate endeavored to educate the public about the historical contributions and implications of their ancestors in the name of identity building. The factions pursued different strategies in trying to come to terms with the historical information that was produced during the controversy. Accordingly, the memory work that ensued responded to the differing interests of the respective groups and the various acts of remembering fully converted a piece of public art into a site of memory. As the opposing factions did not split neatly along ethnic lines, the complexity of the debate calls for a dynamic reading that accounts for the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion that prompted people to rally behind a particular argument. Rather than juxtaposing monolithic ethnic

²⁹¹ cf. Gibbs 28 July 1999. To statue proponents, Oñate’s foundational act counted as “undisputed fact”; cf. “Arts Board Scuttles” 12 Feb. 1999; Sanchez 19 Mar. 1999; Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999. Also, proponents insisted on his inclusion in the project as “too important to leave out,” especially members of the NM HCPL; Zoretich 24 Feb. 2000. Positions ranged from honoring Oñate’s political significance as “Founding Father and First Governor of New Mexico” – as suggested by historian and Oñate biographer Marc Simmons in 1997 (“Arts Board Scuttles” 12 Feb. 1999) – to measuring him in existential parameters as the figure without whom “there would be no New Mexico”; Brandtner 15 Apr. 1999.

entities, reading the controversy for processes of boundary construction can account for the ways in which identities are constructed and open the discussion to more abstract concerns.

While recognition of Hispanic history was generally accepted, Oñate opponents acutely registered the exclusivist implications of the celebration envisioned by Santillanes and her followers: “They have a right to celebrate. [...] It’s hurtful to exclude our history” (Santana Titla of Acoma Pueblo qtd. in Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998). Especially Native American critics emphasized the need for reconciliation, as the historic events had caused a pain still felt in the community: “That pain is passed down through our oral histories [...] We feel that healing should come out of this monument” (Wanda Aragon of Acoma qtd. in Reed 5 Feb. 1998).²⁹² Calling for reconciliation, Ron Shutiva, former governor of Acoma, argued for discussion based on an inclusive attitude and on sustained dialogue: “My concern would be that this committee reach out to the pueblo of Acoma and its leadership and truly ask, what are the concerns, what are the feelings of Acoma people?” (qtd. in DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998). Eventually, the design should aim at a representation that would consider both colonizers and colonized and address the moment of colonial encounter as well as its consequences for the present. Darva Chino of Acoma summed up the sentiment when she declared “There are so many ways we can recognize Hispanic history without putting up a statue of Oñate.”²⁹³ Throughout the years of controversy, the wish for healing the rift that divided the community and a rejection of an exclusive commemoration of Oñate sustained the memorial supporters on the Native American side.²⁹⁴ More militant Native American resistance formed only after the decision to include Oñate in the design had become definite (cf. Carrico 18 Feb. 2003; Maurus Chino 10 July 2005; Norrell 24 June 2005).

²⁹² Antonio Trujillo, Catholic priest for Acoma, pointed to the emotional aspect and warned against the arresting power of the past: “Of all the pueblos, Acoma had the most atrocities against them. There’s a lot of emotion, and it shows there is a need for reconciliation. When there isn’t reconciliation, [...]. We become caught in the past”; qtd. in Linthicum 1 Feb. 1998.

²⁹³ qtd. in Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000. Darva Chino insisted on complete implementation of the standards for a work of public art and therefore embraced the collective design, particularly for its downsizing Oñate’s dominating presence and exclusive recognition; cf. Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999; “Colonization Monument” 11 Feb. 1999. She announced that critics would observe the process as to fulfillment of the requirements for public art and for a memorial: “We’re still going to be intervening, because we want to see approval of the (design). We want to see an accurate historical account, if there’s still going to be a (historical) time line. We’re still expecting to see a time line that has everything in it, that doesn’t eliminate the truth”; Chino qtd. in DellaFlora 7 Mar. 2000.

²⁹⁴ Despite many angry exchanges in council meetings, the wish for reconciliation persisted: “If I could take the hate from the hearts of everyone here tonight, that is what I would do”; Amber Carillo of Laguna Pueblo qtd. in Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000. By then, however, the desire for closure had become more pronounced, as witnessed in an exasperated statement by Neri Holguin of Petroglyph National Monument Protection Coalition: “It’s painful to hear Hispanic elders, people of my parents’ generation, be so mean [...] I don’t want to hear this anymore. This is terrible. Please end this tonight”; Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000.

While reconciliation was paramount to Native American Oñate opponents, Hispanics in that faction made identity-related issues their central concern. Facing the challenge of the multicultural situation in New Mexico, they countered the limitations of the Hispanic-Indian dichotomy by embracing Native American positions in the concept of *mestizaje* and directing attention also to Mexican American perspectives (cf. Gonzales & Rodriguez 26 Mar. 1999). Arturo Sandoval argued to remember that beyond the conquistador legacy Hispanic/*Chicano*/Mexican/*mestizo* New Mexicans had “so many positive things to do for cuarto centenario, a lot of them education-based. The almost exclusive focus on an ongoing controversy over a statue was taking away from these things” (Reed 5 Feb. 1998). The University of New Mexico took up on that cue in its own *Cuartocentenario* celebrations. They were devoted to the richness of a diverse heritage displayed in cultural forms like folk dramas and rituals which, as expressions of coexistence and as the transcendence of ethnic boundaries, were seen as offering “an answer to the dilemmas of history” (Maurer 21 Sep. 1998).²⁹⁵ Countering the mono-culturalism of Oñate proponents, especially Chicano critics of the commemoration extended the concept of *mestizaje* back to the Iberian Peninsula with its legacy of Moorish conquest, thus offering an expansion of the concept of the American as a new type of man, *la (nueva) raza* – to which Oñate indeed contributed. In this they invoked both Crèvecoeur and José Martí to develop hemispheric perceptions of New World identity.

III.3 THE *CUARTOCENTENARIO* AS MONUMENT/MEMORIAL

The two sections of the *Cuartocentenario* pull towards the opposite poles in Danto’s definition of monument and memorial (1985), leaving the overall project suspended in ambiguity. The arguments raised in the debate and the commemorative forms favored by the opposing camps almost paradigmatically heed Danto’s dictum that “We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget” (1985: 152).²⁹⁶ Danto’s condensed definition not only addresses issues of (artistic) form and (historical) content of a work devoted to commemoration, but also entails the process of its creation – erecting or building – and the view on the past that informs it, emphasizing

²⁹⁵ The vital rural tradition of *Hispano* and Native American folk festivals testified to the need for both ethnic and urban-rural cultural interaction, as folklorist Enrique Lamadrid of UNM pointed out: “This festival is not about the tragedies of the conquest. It is about the traditional festivals of New Mexico’s Hispano and Native American communities and the profound insight they give into ongoing cultural relations”; qtd. in Maurer 21 Sep. 1998.

²⁹⁶ While the issue over which the factions split is in fact the form of commemoration – monument or memorial – I will refer to the most contested content-related aspect of the controversy to characterize the opposing camps. Thus the party favoring a monument will be referred to as the (Hispanic) Oñate proponents, the party favoring a memorial will be dubbed the Oñate opponents or critics (without a clear ethnic affiliation).

continuity (“always remember”) or insinuating closure (“never forget”). Additionally, Danto leads us to inquire about the collective “we” that erects or builds and remembers or forgets: who assumes authorship over the cultural text of commemoration, who constitutes the audience? If a commemoration is intentionally purposeful (“so that”) and bears a moralistic exhortation (“shall always” / “shall never”) which are the motives and values that inform it? Beyond the problem of classification, the issue that must concern us with regard to the *Cuartocentenario* project is its character as a cultural text, a site of memory that oscillates between contradictory commemorative motivations but is rooted in and responds to the concerns of a larger community: rather than being a Hispanic and/or Pueblo expression of memory and identity, the *Cuartocentenario* in its bifurcated state reflects a historic moment in the collective present (and past – and future) of New Mexico.

Throughout the debate, the terms monument and memorial were used interchangeably, with a slight preference for the term memorial as the controversy developed. In its initial stage, the guidelines for the *Cuartocentenario* conceptually combined monument and memorial. Kathy Freise explicates how the concepts of monument and memorial meet and are also juxtaposed in its constituent parts, the landscape installation and the figurative representation (2003: 97; see Fig. 12). However, it is also possible to perceive the parts not as elements of a unified whole but instead as addressed to different audiences. Millie Santillanes represents this position in public statements as well as in personal conversation and maintains that the finished project were two separate ‘memorials’: “They can have their memorial – but don’t interfere with mine” (12 Oct. 2005). This position was assumed by Millie Santillanes in public statements as well as in personal conversation. The contradictory functions thus ascribed to the piece threaten to tear it apart.

The issue of content had such an overwhelming presence in the Oñate controversy that it threatened to eclipse all other concerns. It most clearly underscores the dichotomy between monument and memorial behind which the different factions rallied. Proponents promoted Oñate’s arrival in the terms of a foundational myth to mark the beginning of present-day New Mexico, embodied in the heroic figure of Don Juan de Oñate who led the first settlers to their new land. A celebratory monument was to be designed that told of the courageous exploits of Spanish conquest and the triumphant arrival of civilization and showed the contributions of their ancestors to New Mexican history in order to instill Hispanic pride in a noble past and glorious heritage. Marking the central antagonism between and concern of the respective factions, Oñate as heroic victor was held up against the defeated Pueblo of Acoma and their dead.

Oñate opponents, on the other hand, emphasized the need for mourning the end of pre-Columbian Native American culture, foregrounding reflection on the historical experience of cultural exchange between indigenous and incoming populations. After a memory of four centuries of conflict had been resurrected and the wish to put this conflict to an end had become palpable, Oñate critics envisioned a reconciliatory memorial that accounted for the complex story of often violent colonial encounter, honoring human loss and suffering and speaking of grief and pain as well as positive achievements in order to arrive at healing for the community. Instead of a singular personality, such a memorial would recognize a collective effort.

While the theme of the CCP caused heated controversy, the conceptual side of artistic expression was less openly debated and mainly relegated to the artists. As the different factions argued about the narrative focus of the piece – Oñate or Acoma, victory or humiliation, the ‘triumph of civilization’ or the suffering of subjugation – they neglected to address both the story-telling itself and the reasons for telling whichever story they supported. They thus neglected to discuss the sustainability of their respective historical visions, never answering to themselves or others the question of future directions. Additionally, they neglected to define their respective authorship, thus losing control over narrative form and content. Subsequently, the elements of the story tumbled out into public debate to be taken up and utilized as arguments by whoever pleased and as they saw fit. In other words, the flexible use and recombination of fragments from the past attests to the malleability of memory.

In Santillanes’ first proposal, creating the CCP indeed amounted to “erecting” the piece, in a straightforward establishment of a historical moment in public space and collective memory. The will to “erect” a monument tolerated neither objection nor rumination, instead dismissing it as ‘political correctness,’ and was impatient to mark the historical moment within the anniversary year. To achieve their goal of erecting an Oñate monument – an official commemoration that celebrated the moral qualities of the original colonists in order to define cultural identity and formulate a unique Hispanic New Mexican character (cf. Girshick 2003) – proponents applied some strategic forgetting in their attempts at silencing or relativizing memories of Oñate’s failures.²⁹⁷ Judging from the rhetoric, they regarded the controversy less an exchange of opinions than a test of strength between antagonizing cultural forces. The stakes in this confrontation were cultural superiority and social power. Yet the *Cuartocentenario* passed and no Oñate monument came in sight. Instead, the extensive debate about the project and the bewildering decision-making process emerged as a “building” process in which the pieces eventually came together, gradually and haltingly.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Santillanes’s plea for ‘historical illusions’; DellaFlora “Oñate Statue Triggers.”

Oñate opponents in keeping with their objective – a memorial to represent the encounter and convergence of two cultural systems – were more prone to approach the emerging controversy based on respect of the opposing interests. Focussing on a shared humanity and a common fate and concerned about the consequences that the project might have for Albuquerque and New Mexico, their stance was initially more conciliatory and tried to avert the fight that was already on the horizon. To them, the conflict needed to be resolved through open dialogue and they sought to argue for and negotiate towards reconciliation. Still they protected their own interests and would not compromise their concerns. After unrelenting attacks from Oñate proponents their resistance became more pronounced, and it can be argued that militant anti-Oñate activism appeared only after the decision to include Oñate in the CCP design had been finalized and the next anniversary occasion beckoned.²⁹⁸ Neither party in the controversy was willing to give up sacred ground, so to speak.

The three artists conceived of their respective sections likewise in monumental or memorial terms: Rivera and Sabo envisioned their contribution to the emerging work in monumental fashion, alluding both to Remington's tradition of Western American sculpture and to the figural realist style of contemporary public sculpture represented in Goodacre's work (Fig. 19).²⁹⁹ While inherently interchangeable (compare, for example, Rivera's *Journey's End* (2003) dedicated to the Santa Fe Trail), *La Jornada* is ostentatious as a representation and didactic in its ambition to tell the visitor "how it really was" as well as in its promotion of virtues and values ascribed to the early settlers that allegedly characterize the Hispanic population of New Mexico to this day.

Naranjo-Morse designed her piece as a reflection on the past and response to their vision, thus tending towards a memorial. Her form is introspective, invites individual remembrance and engages the local and regional context of the piece. While indebted to concept art, unlike *La Jornada* Naranjo-Morse's section emulates no art-historical model. It speaks to the "reality of endings" (Danto 1985: 152) and also unfolds a "moral landscape" (153) in confronting linearity and circularity as antithetical principles of spatial imagination.

²⁹⁸ Radical statements like the ones made by Maurus Chino, speaking for the Southwest Indigenous Alliance, only entered into the controversy in 2005, when the Albuquerque Tricentennial (2006) appeared as a potential occasion to dedicate the *Cuartocentenario*, possibly even coinciding with the dedication for John Houser's *Equestrian* in El Paso. He lambasted Oñate as a "savage and brutal war leader, inept as a political leader, a disgrace to his government" whose memory would perpetually "shame the cities of El Paso and Albuquerque. [...] We are forced to honor a war criminal" (qtd. in Norrell 24 June 2005).

²⁹⁹ Sculptor Glenna Goodacre is best known for her Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. (1993), the design for the dollar coin showing Sacagawea (2000) and the Irish Famine Memorial for Penn's Landing in Philadelphia (2002), comprising 35 life-sized figures. She is a fellow of the National Sculpture Society and maintains a studio in Santa Fe. In Albuquerque, her work is represented through "Sidewalk Society" in downtown Albuquerque's Civic Plaza and "Park Place 1998" on the museum grounds next to the *Cuartocentenario*; cf. Fields-Meyer 14 June 1999; Jonas 2002.

Numbe Whageh allows the spectator to individually experience the site and opens a space for personal re-enactment of the historic moment when a way of life was forever changed (cf. DellaFlora 19 Dec. 1999). Only the names of the first Spanish settlers to be inscribed on a retaining wall (instead of the names of the fallen at Acoma) constitute an element that breaks the categories (cf. Sturken 1991: 120-22). Yet whether they serve to further consolidate the constituency of the monumental commemoration – descendants of the first families – or by virtue of their biographical implications for New Mexicans build the bridge to an integrated future that memorial proponents envisioned must remain an open question at this point.

III.4 THE *CUARTOCENTENARIO* AS PUBLIC ART

As sites of memory, monuments and memorials respond to commemorative concerns, represent opinions and materialize perspectives of the group that endorses them. They constitute interested look-outs on the past in public space. While historically most closely associated with the nation-state, in recent decades they have become accessible and proliferated to embrace the concerns of minorities and further sub-national social groups. As representations, they constitute genres of public art, yet with a slight difference, as Danto points out: “A memorial is not intended to be an object of aesthetic gratification but a reminder of something in danger of being forgotten [...] the aims of a memorial are by definition distinct from those of a work of art [...] Imagination is not the same as history. Memorials are tied to what happened” (Danto 17 Oct. 2005).

The proposal for an Oñate monument was challenged from the wider community exactly on the level of its being a piece of public art with a “tie to what happened,” invoking its accountability to the community and shifting its perspective towards a shared – rather than an exclusively Spanish – vision on the New Mexican past. Moving the project close to an “official vision,” monument opponents called for veracity in the representation of historic events, for a reconciliatory function, and for public participation. From very early in the debate, Gordon Church, the City of Albuquerque’s Public Arts Program coordinator, had emphasized the mediating function of public art for a culturally diverse community such as Albuquerque, even if it meant embracing major differences of opinion. Public art, he argued, had the potential to “address a difficult subject through a difficult, collaborative process” (“Give Oñate-Sculpture Artists” 25 Feb. 1998) and to invite reflection about its subject rather than naturalizing it to the extent of invisibility: “[T]he role of art in this state is to bring these issues to the public and help us work through them” (qtd. in Reed 5 Feb. 1998).³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ cf. Rolwing 17 May 1998. Church also discouraged moral judgment in his call for a balanced presentation. Forgoing the question of “who is right and wrong, or who did what to whom [...] is probably the fairest way that

Both the Arts Board and the public of Albuquerque had already been sensitized to the intricacies of public art projects through the city's vital tradition of seeking public comment and participation. When policies and guidelines for developing the CCP were discussed, inter-project references included an earlier *Camino Real Heritage Drive* for Albuquerque's Fourth Street (1995) that was reminiscent of El Paso's *Twelve Travelers* project, as well as the monument at OMVC in Alcalde.³⁰¹ Arts Board members explained their hesitance to support the CCP proposal with regard to the development at the Oñate center in Alcalde where comment from the local Indian reservations had not been sought: "I'm from Northern New Mexico and I saw that when they did the Oñate statue. There was no discussion, from what I understand, with some of the local Indian reservations" (Francie Cordova qtd. in DellaFlora 13 Dec. 1995). In the difficult process of first finding and then promoting standards for a balanced perspective on the past across ethnic and political boundary lines, however, DellaFlora's concluding hope is likely to be disappointed: "Although the board expects pressure to honor certain individuals or groups, it is taking pains to depoliticize the selection process and better define potential honorees." It appears impossible to depoliticize memory that aspires to recognition and works through processes of exclusion and inclusions.

III.5 RETURNING MEMORY TO THE COMMUNITY: PUBLIC ART FOR ALL NEW MEXICANS

Critics of the CCP expected the project to respond to citizens' concerns not only through participation but also through an inclusive agenda. As it was a piece of public art that used tax-generated funds, the collective experience of the community ought to be privileged over overt politicking and critics called for moderation and a return to project-related issues: "[P]ublic art has to be truthful, and it can't be used to promote a private, political agenda" (Cecilia Aragon qtd. in Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998).³⁰² While Santillanes and her following were busy establishing a battle field for the culture wars, critics of the *Cuartocentenario* rejected the overt politicking. One of their levers for criticism was funding. As a piece of public art that, it was argued, the CCP ought to respond to that would eventually result in a work that In other words: If all New Mexicans were to pay for it, they all needed to

we can present it to our diverse society, to allow for a diversity of interpretations"; "Colonization Monument" 11 Feb. 1999. He considered the memorial project itself and the ensuing debate as an important, if challenging step in the development of a civic spirit; DellaFlora 3 Dec. 1999.

³⁰¹ <http://www.cabq.gov/publicart/cipatr7.html>. Personalities were to be included in the 'heritage drive' based on their contributions to the growth of the city and the state as well as their humanitarian commitment; potential honorees could be excluded from consideration based on human rights violations.

³⁰² A Letter to the Editor also strongly criticizes "the manner in which a rowdy band of Iberian-centric, culture-renegades have attempted to thwart the public arts process through sheer intimidation and back-door politics," instead calling for public arts to recognize diversity, a task not to be dictated by "aristocrats" or politicians, but that ought to be left to the artists and cultural advocates; Jojola 23 Apr. 1999.

find themselves in this piece of public sculpture in the public space of Albuquerque or ought at least not be offended by it.³⁰³ Furthermore, public funding entailed a responsibility to strive for a balanced perspective “[aiming] at the truth about Oñate’s expedition” especially with regard to Acoma (Rodriguez & Gonzales 8 Apr. 1998).³⁰⁴ As we have seen in the previous chapter, the search for truth with regard to Oñate mainly uncovered his ambivalence, causing further defensive moves on the part of those who built their identity on a glorious conquistador past and thus intensifying the division of the community.

For the stricter critics the ‘truth’ precluded any consideration of a monument to Oñate, yet a moderate wing held that commemoration should result in a shared perspective on community concerns. While the suffering and loss inflicted upon Acomas through Oñate and “passed down through our oral histories” (W. Aragon qtd. in Reed 5 Feb. 1998) ought not to be forgotten, they needed to be transcended. Acknowledging the past in public sculpture ought to be informed by and express mutual appreciation of the different groups in the present and lead to reconciliation between groups based on a shared past. Ron Shutiva and Conroy Chino, nationally acclaimed TV news anchor from Acoma, represented the moderate position that supported a balanced perspective, remembering Oñate’s deeds without being bound by them: “We should use this time to draw on one another for emotional support, bridge our worlds and replenish that spiritual bond between us. We may have been enemies 400 years ago, but now our only enemies should be racism, prejudice and ignorance” (C. Chino qtd. in Linthicum 1 Feb. 1998).³⁰⁵ Both Shutiva and Chino faced the emotional realities of Acoma’s

³⁰³ Individual Arts Board members emphasized accountability toward community concerns when dealing with public funds and with the lasting, and also emotional, impact of public art works: “[...] You have to take everything in context. But the fact to me is there is still a very strong kind of negative reaction toward Oñate, and if that means that a whole group of people will be hurt, whether they’re using the correct standards to judge the action is irrelevant. The fact that they are going to be hurt and it will divide the community again, that serves no purpose to me”; councilor Anne Cooper qtd. in DellaFlora “Oñate Statue Triggers.”

³⁰⁴ Trina Enisco of Acoma Pueblo explicitly stated her reservations against using public funds during a public council meeting: “We don’t need another fetish to injustice hung around our necks. [...] I cannot support any such memorial with my tax dollars”; qtd. in Reed 5 Feb. 1998. While Pueblo people were not principally opposed to the commemoration, they were critical of using public money for an exclusive representation of Oñate and for a location in Tiguex Park. Darva Chino, Albuquerque resident of Acoma origin, explicitly objected to spending tax dollars on the project with regard to the political and historical implications of the design (DellaFlora 14 Jan. 1998). The All-Indian Pueblo Council representing all 19 Pueblo groups in NM also opposed using tax money for any Oñate statue projects (Rolwing 17 May 1998). Thus, public opinion and the political bodies representing Native Americans in the state agreed that if the project were to remain exclusive in its outlook, it should not be funded through tax money.

³⁰⁵ Chino’s call for reconciliation was phrased as an appeal never to forget the historic events and thus presented him as an advocate of a memorial. Acoma elder and spiritual leader Velma Chino also discouraged antagonistic approaches, instead emphasizing the common humanity of Native and non-Native Americans using an Acoma creation story (Linthicum 1 Feb. 1998) and pointing to the need for fairness and racial harmony in the debate and in the community; cf. Gallegos 7 Mar. 2000. Shutiva rather advocated acknowledging and educating about the past: “It needs to be known. There’s no way to turn back that hand of time. You can’t change what happened. Maybe we just need to acknowledge that those things did happen and that is it”; qtd. in Linthicum 1 Feb. 1998.

loss and Oñate's enduring impact, yet wished to see the historic divide bridged through dialogue and better founded historical knowledge in order for the community to continue to exist in relative harmony. Closing the record of past conflicts was to open paths towards a common, shared future.³⁰⁶

That path was embraced from the beginning by the Arts Board, even if it was superseded by the aggressive tone and theme of the controversy.³⁰⁷ The debate suggests a reconsideration of commemorative forms, adding a third, if as yet emerging, alternative to the oppositional expressions of monument and memorial. Public art no longer is solely measurable by its outcome but comprises the processes and the actors leading to the realization of a commemorative form. The memory work that precedes the establishment of a site becomes an integral part of rather than simply the prelude to a site of memory and inspires not only new forms and alternative aesthetics but also a new constitution of artistic creation. Self-reflexivity enters into the work as an integral element of the representation. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial paradigmatically displays the tension between monumental and memorial aesthetics when the representational styles of Maya Lin's abstract Wall and the highly suggestive, detailed figurative realism of Goodacre's and Hart's all-American sculpture clashed in another instance of a failed commemorative dialogic. Beyond the binary oppositions of realism and abstraction, male and female perspectives, patriotic and iconoclastic representation, the fundamental assumptions that inform the audience's tastes as well as the artists' aesthetics play into the manifestations of public art. The predicament resurfaced in Albuquerque with the collision of landscape installation and sculpture group, feminine and masculine design, reflection and myth-making implied in the juxtaposition of Naranjo-Morse's piece and Sabo and Rivera's figures. The collaborative approach favored by the Arts Board with its emphasis on civic participation might have accommodated a relational aesthetic as envisioned by New Genre Public Art and offered potential for a reorientation of

³⁰⁶ Shutiva emphasized that "[Oñate] is someone who really had a drastic impact on our people. The hurt. The feelings are still there," drastically seconded by Chino's pointed statement that "[t]he bottom line is people died. Hundreds of my ancestors died"; Shutiva and Chino qtd. in Rolwing 17 May 1998. The wish for closure was repeatedly expressed by voices from the Native American community: While some rejected Oñate's significance outright, as he had neither contributed to their past nor was likely to do so in the future (cf. Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999), others protested the symbolic repetition of colonial suffering: "I don't think we should let Oñate inflict pain again"; Mendez qtd. in Zoretich 6 Apr. 1999. Still others hoped that a revised and inclusive design would "finally put this horrible 400-year-old conflict behind us"; Yu 19 Mar. 1999.

³⁰⁷ The Arts Board had proposed public art guidelines that called for a historic profile in order to develop the project so as to "acknowledge both the positive and negative achievements of the individual in the interest of fairness and historical accuracy"; DellaFlora "Oñate Statue Triggers." Thus, they hoped, the project would perform the memory work necessary to reconcile the opposing factions and reach an acceptable compromise. Concerned to ensure an educational effect of public art while protecting the creative autonomy of the artists involved, board members suggested to address negative aspects in different media, if that led to accounting for the complete story; DellaFlora "Oñate Statue Triggers".

the *Cuartocentenario* towards trialogue. Especially Naranjo-Morse's section created a space for present-ing the past through its experiential dimension, through the idea of circular time and in the notion of simultaneity. In re-creating a place of emergence she also alluded to explicitly female interpretations inherent in Pueblo mythology and played on images of the earth as mother and womb.³⁰⁸ The creative process that led to the piece as well as a visitor's experience of immersion and emergence may thus also be abstracted as a process of birth. The innovative energy, however, was short-circuited by the pre-conceived idea of Rivera's and Sabo's section who expected to continue unchallenged with an established tale of historic representation and realist public art. The Hispanic proponents of the *Cuartocentenario* attempted to claim spaces firmly associated with the Anglo domination of Albuquerque at the same time that they meant to silence the Native American voice and erase their presence. They perpetuated a national narrative that subsumes the regional experience under a national meaning and thus suppresses particularities and diversity.

The Cuartocentenario celebrations functioned as a catalyst for the reformulations of New Mexicans' relation to their pasts that were to be made permanent in public space through the commemorative sites. In Albuquerque as at the other two sites it becomes clearly evident that the Oñate sites must be considered as points where a new landscape of New Mexican memories finds its points of condensation, potentially as sites from which common ground for all New Mexicans might be built. In the ensemble of sites, Albuquerque most clearly functioned as a meeting ground of differing perspectives and visions. Still the move toward common ground requested by critics of the celebratory Oñate commemoration at first sight amounts to little more than a return to the exceptionalist 'Land of Enchantment. Will there ever be common ground for an inclusive vision of New Mexican identity? Whether the *Cuartocentenario* as a site of memory will resolve the contradictions inscribed in the history it evokes, in its own project history and in the history it set out to make anew is an open question at this point. The trialogue continues.

³⁰⁸ Naranjo-Morse encouraged such interpretations when she described her design as "feminine"; June-Friesen 2006.

EPILOGUE

The present study initially set out to test Nora's hypothesis that memory attaches itself to sites, while history attaches itself to events (1989: 22). At first glance, Nora's dichotomies seemed to be reflected in Oñate commemoration as it split into the monument sites that provoked public controversy on the one hand and the official, apparently uncontested events of the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations on the other. The division apparently affirmed in paradigmatic manner how social and cultural knowledge of the past can be constituted either temporally or spatially. Different vernacular interpretations of the past competed for legitimacy at the material, tangible monument sites, while the officially sanctioned and scholarly endorsed rendition of past events was sustained by the celebrations. Yet upon closer scrutiny the sites under investigation soon complicated this ordering scheme. The debates over the place(s) of Oñate commemoration in New Mexico made evident that sites of memory indeed occupy a liminal position, that they are located in a *space between* memory and history, as the title to Nora's theoretical introduction to his multi-volume work *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992) already indicates. The three case studies that I present affirm the liminality, situating Oñate commemoration not only between the realms of private and public versions of the past, between affirmative and resistant interpretations, and between grassroots and top-down processes of constructing it but also between the abstraction of 'Hispanic contributions' to American society and the experience of deprivation and exclusion from it. Both in the sites and in the commemorative acts, spatiality and temporality vied for dominance to authenticate and legitimate memories. The *Cuartocentenario* events were organized around spectacular reenactments of Oñate's *entrada* throughout the state that appealed to the senses and aimed for persuasion through empathy. They thus dispelled any claims to historical detachment. The suggestive symbolic power together with the material presence of the commemorative sites and events evoked antithetic discourses that juxtaposed not only vernacular and official interpretations of the past but also challenged them as inherently misplaced expressions of the desire to belong, either through exclusive ethnic self-assertion or uncritical patriotism. In the liminal space between memory and history, different interpretations of the New Mexican past revolved around the sites without a prospect of resolution. The memorial practices observed at the three sites that allow inferences as to the diverging interpretations of the past held by the memory-makers suggested that the temporal aspects of recollection were so inextricably intertwined as to render any opposition of memory and history meaningless, that indeed memory was seized by (or itself seized) history (cf. Nora 1989: 13).

My case studies interpret the establishment of monuments as a fundamental strategy by which groups emplace their memories and thus themselves and their identities in the

cultural landscape and aim to transform this landscape in their own interest. Building monuments to the Hispanic past in the Southwest is exemplary for the processes whereby a group invests space with cultural meaning through material objects, resorting to narratives and practices that build on or even establish foundational myths. The commemorative practices accompanying the sites in New Mexico reveal monuments to Oñate as tangible objectifications of Hispanic memory, situating them within landscapes of memory that in contrast to the hopes for reconciliation expressed by Kirk Savage (1994: 146 n6) do not accommodate difference but are mutually exclusive.

On the surface, because monuments like historic sites centrally relate to and link space and memory, the Oñate projects could be validated through arguments that emphasized the prospective revenues brought to the community by heritage tourism (cf. Lowenthal 1975: 3). Therefore, the monuments lent themselves especially well to the rationales of economic and environmental planning, as in the downtown revitalization projects of El Paso. Yet such arguments wear thin quickly when scrutinized from a spatial perspective. Approaching sites and landscapes of memory spatially highlights the processes whereby space is commodified and necessarily accounts for the actual inequities in the lived experience of individuals and groups, inequities that are mostly erased in representational forms. It therefore helps to break the symbolic spell cast by the concept of memory that critics of the ‘memory boom’ have denounced as pseudo-religious (Klein 2000: 141; 145). Looking closely at the fabrications of memory and circulation of meaning within the spatial frameworks of the American Southwest, looking closely at the processes by which Southwestern history and landscape are constructed and interpreted as part of a larger cultural narrative (cf. Laqueur 2000: 6), that is reading the landscape as memory can serve to disentangle the intersection of time and space that is inherent to sites of memory.

Sites of memory as material, spatial and textual re-presentations recover the past. They place it within cultural webs of significance wherein identity can be anchored and explained. However, rather than merely recovering an unbroken and unchanging repertoire of traditions, memory reshapes perspectives on the past in and through present commemorative rituals and myths that rise from ongoing dialogues between present and past. In fact, the controversies over the theme, form and location of the respective Oñate monuments demonstrated the active role that memory can assume in conflicts over creating commemorative forms (cf. Johnson 2004: 321; Thelen 1989: xvii) or in negotiations of their identificatory function. The spatial organization of tradition establishes landscapes of memory from the interconnection of sites, and the historical terrain thus symbolically claimed and defended in turn issues claims to

actual territory. And just like the sites of which it is comprised, a landscape of memory operates on different levels, negotiating the actual history and the symbolic interpretations thereof and accumulating multiple layers of meaning.

However, sites also impact on the people who dwell in the landscapes of memory, pointing to the limits of cultural negotiation. As the construction of place and space is also a process of production, it is entangled with the contentious issue of ownership and with the decontextualizing power of commodification. The controversial story of Onate's legacy in the Rio Grande area points to signifying processes that construct the spaces of New Mexico as Indian country, Land of Enchantment, Aztlán or Hispano homeland. Therefore, the spectrum of perceptions whereby the past has been interpreted ranges from the seminal conversations between Turner's frontier hypothesis and Bolton's Spanish Borderlands model to the revisions of American history by ethnic and New Western historians. Yet regional images that build on heritage and legacy operate on the nexus of time and identity while concealing the realities of spatial dispossession and segregation. For this reason, I have juxtaposed the temporal abstractions of Onate commemoration with the resistant memory of actual spatial experience as it became manifest in the land rights movement that aimed at the restitution of land titles lost after the Mexican American War or in the resistance to gentrification in urban planning. This memory considers conquest and cultural appropriation from the perspective of those who suffer subjugation and territorial dispossession. It testifies to ethnic and cultural persistence and launches one of the new conversations about alternative futures that Mary Kelley called for in her millennial address to the American Studies Association (2000: 17).

Displacement and emplacement have characterized the landscape, social networks and sense of self in New Mexico since Juan de Oñate superimposed a Spanish colonial order on this part of Native America in 1598. The importance and significance of spatiality for a territory that changed hands between different empires and nation-states – Spain, Mexico, the U.S.A. – becomes evident in a tradition of “land-based explanations” of regional development. With regard to the constant redefinition of the meaning of ‘America’ in a nation of immigrants, Bolton's Spanish Borderlands rather than Turner's Frontier accommodates the processes of cultural negotiation and the transnational dimension characteristic for Southwestern history. In addressing the spatial concerns of the present conflicts over symbolic acts and sites of memory, however, my study traces the continuation of the “Western practice of the subjection of other cultures and its rhetorical dissimulation” that Mackenthun identifies as the legacy of conquest. The pervasive transformations of ideological organization and exploitation of economic resources have prompted defensive and protective attitudes toward space which

respond to strategies of displacement, marginalization, and exclusion (cf. Mackenthun 1996: 85-86).

The horizon of New Mexico historiography as well as its memory has been delimited by the respective locations of the actors and observers of the historical dynamic. The definitions and oppositionalities that have come to determine the region were ultimately defined by perspective: Seen from without or within, considered of marginal or central concern, approached from cultural and intellectual centers lying south or north(east), the Southwest/New Mexico was given and itself assumed a positionality in larger discourses that sought to explain the nature and significance of 'the American experience,' the creation of novel societies and narratives in a new world. Hispanic or Anglo, Catholic or Protestant, Mexican or American - the dichotomies that derived from encounter and confrontation of old world selves and new world others and that have shaped the perceptions of America and the United States to this day are visibly present in the debates about commemoration at the sites of memory along the Rio Grande. In the widest sense, they could be read as a continuation of colonial competition over 500 years, where the legitimacy of the oldest colony, *Nuevo México*, contends with the claims of one of the younger U.S. federal states.³⁰⁹

Various notions of difference inform the forms of boundaries and practices of boundary drawing that can be observed in the debates around and over the monument sites I have investigated. They originate in a feeling of Southwestern exceptionalism that is superficially manifest in catchy tourist slogans like "the City Different" (Santa Fe) or "Do Texas Different" (El Paso) but that reaches to the understanding of regional identity as informed by a past which, while it may deviate in details and content matter from the national historical narrative, still shares its fundamental principles and characteristics. The Southwest is thus constructed as a space of difference *and* belonging. My study has traced the negotiations of these antithetical desires in the narratives of history and identity promoted by one group in the tri-ethnic spectrum of New Mexico, officially referred to as Hispanic. The controversies around the monument projects in Alcalde, Albuquerque and El Paso show how Hispanics articulate and defend social and political interests through 'memory politics,' that is through strategic reference to and omissions from the record of the regional past. The narratives that emerge testify to the heterogeneity of the Hispanic population and reveal the landscapes to which the stories are anchored as contradictorily storied borderlands.

The presence of Hispanics in New Mexico is spatially documented in an architectural and agricultural legacy that encompasses historic urban districts and rural settlement patterns, mission churches and murals, place names, street names, and monuments. Likewise, the

³⁰⁹ New Mexico reached statehood in 1912.

celebration of Hispanic culture, history, and identity has a long and well-documented tradition in New Mexico. It begins with the invention of the 'Land of Enchantment' and the Spanish Revival of the 1920s that drew on folk celebrations and traditions of crafts and pageantry that reach back to the colonial foundations of the state and continues today in yearly Fiestas and reenactments that draw locals and tourists alike. Both the idea for Oñate commemoration and the objection voiced against it originate in and are sustained by the rich tradition of sites and rites of New Mexican memory. Read in context with the *Cuartocentenario* celebrations of 1998 which recreated the expedition, the moment of arrival, and even cultural encounter the Oñate monuments clearly draw on this tradition, but they also supply it with a different quality: They complement the ephemeral, if annually repeated invocation of Hispanic heritage through community celebrations with their tangible, permanent presence, materializing and stabilizing the past in the every-day spaces of the Rio Grande Valley. The celebratory recognition is expanded from the village *plaza* to encompass and remake the larger framework of identificatory spaces of the Rio Grande area – the border, the rural heartland, and the urban *barrio* – in an iconic Hispanic image.

The icon – don Juan de Oñate – emerged from the celebrations and controversies equipped with attributes of allegorical quality loaned from the repertoire of the Anglo American experiences of landing and westward expansion. The First Thanksgiving cast Oñate in the mold of a pilgrim father, leading pious settlers rather than fortune-seeking colonists across the forbidding Chihuahuan desert and to the banks of the Rio Grande to gratefully celebrate delivery from hardships in anticipation of the promised land. As a bringer of secular order and spiritual redemption to the 'savage' northern frontier of New Spain, he resembles the founding fathers in establishing a premeditated society on the fringes of the known world.

The figure of the intrepid explorer and colonizer was designed to substantiate and personify the 'Hispanic contributions' to American national memory. Celebrating a valiant individual aimed at overwriting the image of cruel oppressor that originates in the tradition of the Black Legend. Anglo Americans invoked the negative image during centuries of colonial competition with Spain to 'other' Hispanics and thus to delegitimize their legal, social and cultural claims to participation and recognition. Yet while his civilizing mission and the administrative aspects of the *Entrada* let Oñate appear as a benevolent patriarch, the violent encounter with the indigenous population and their economic exploitation tie him to the history of colonial expansion and to a pioneer myth informed by Manifest Destiny. Commemorating Oñate depends on the continued suppression of Native American memories and truths, and Otherness is left to reside in the Pueblo and their descendants who cannot embrace Oñate as their hero (cf. Savage 1994: 134-35). As the controversies over Oñate, the

debates about planning the Albuquerque and El Paso projects and the vandalizing of the sculpture in Alcalde show, contestation continues beyond dedication.

The interethnic struggle over culture and land that started with Spanish conquest in the 16th century continued, under changed circumstances, as a history of displacement in the annexation of Mexican territory during the nineteenth century and as a record of exclusion and discrimination during the twentieth century. It also informs the land and water issues of the late 20th century. The resistance movements characterize the conflict over Oñate's memory as the struggle of Hispanics for a remembered and living presence, for a homeland, within the multiply colonized space of New Mexico. Thus, the simultaneous existence of a celebratory discourse of Hispanic contributions *and* an insistent resistance to processes of dispossession mark the territory of Oñate commemoration as a borderlands of the New Mexican past.

The subject and object(ive) of cultural negotiation diverge at the Oñate monument sites: While the cultural battle rages about revising the history of European-Native American relations, the existential concerns relate to the mutual perceptions (and historic rivalry) of Hispanic and Anglo Americans in the region and the nation. In their reference to the Spanish colonial past of the United States, Oñate monuments represent a struggle for cultural recognition and for the formation of ethnic identity in response to national myths (cf. Gersdorf 2000: 409). Celebrating the legacy of conquest in the figure of Oñate points to constructions of America as a monocultural (Anglo) nation. In this perspective, New Mexico and the Southwest are regarded as both a "discursive space [and] a contested cultural terrain in which politically conservative concepts of America as a racial, cultural and historical monolith compete with narratives pointing at internal divisions" within the nation (cf. Gersdorf 2000: 412-16; 416). In contradistinction to commemorative forms that celebrate a 'folk heritage' and thus connote images and practices of Otherness, Oñate monuments deliberately cast the Hispanic experience in the established images and patterns of Anglo-American history, claiming whiteness by reference to the repertoire of dominant society (cf. Montgomery 2000). The monuments thus also represent a continuation of the assimilationist aspirations that have characterized the cultural politics of upper- and middle-class Hispanics in New Mexico ever since the turn of the twentieth century. In celebrating an Old World Spanish, thus European and white heritage, they denounce the New World experience and Mexican legacy that marks Hispanic culture as part Native American and thus non-white and Other (cf. Montgomery 2000). The monuments aim at disambiguation of Anzaldúa's paradoxical borderlands in trying to solidify the past and to carve permanent moments for commemoration from a real-and-imagined space which is in "a constant state of transition" (1987: 25).

The individual sites each evoke characteristic discourses that tie them to cultural imaginations of the region: Set in the space of a border town, Houser's *Equestrian* formulates Hispanic American identity in stark opposition to Mexican or Chicano concepts of identification. His modernist monument extols Oñate as an iconic figure who represents the spirit of an expansionist history and celebrates the achievement of a pioneering individual. His monument path assembles memories along a continuous line that stretches from the beginnings of the Borderlands to the end of the Frontier and thence manufactures a triumphalist and heroic landscape of (South)western civilization. To Houser, Anglo American history subsumes the Hispanic experience. In the image of the traveler, Houser encapsulates the orientalizing perspective on the Southwest as a 'Land of Enchantment' which for the majority of Americans has always been a destination and a place apart. Ironically, the relocation of the sculpture to the airport highlights the traveler motif and suggests to read Houser's project as a manifestation of the 'American creed' with regard to mobility, grandeur and individualism. The latter is manifest in Houser's self-fashioning as well as in his monumental monologue. Houser speaks as much about himself as about the past he represents in his gigantic creation, presenting his private vision of 'America' in the public space of borderlands El Paso.

The larger-than-life figure which Rivera placed in the homeland of northern New Mexico also partakes in the frontier imagination, relating a story of discovery and settlement. Rivera took up the linear narrative of exploration along the *Camino Real* and indicated the foundational act with his classic representation of a leader, founder and initiator of colonial encounter. As in El Paso, Hispanic memory was personified in a singular historical figure. Yet Hispanic history assumes greater centrality and autonomy at OMVC compared to El Paso. It is acknowledged in a bilingual designation of the sculpture and in a transnational mission of the visitors center. Furthermore, some of the boundaries that are so starkly reaffirmed by the *Equestrian* were effectively challenged by the spatial setting of Rivera's sculpture. The history of spatial dispossession and appropriation that had begun with conquest resurfaced in an act of symbolic retribution protesting statewide celebrations of the conquistador in 1998. Through the act of vandalism, Rivera found himself involuntarily engaged in an extended dialogue about violent transformation and unequal exchange and the appropriate format of their representation, a dialogue which extended to matters of actual and symbolic proprietorship of New Mexican spaces. Beyond the controversy, however, the commemorative dialogue also underscored a history of *mestizaje* and resistance which moved Rivera's Oñate at OMVC from the frontier of the New Mexican past closer to the borderlands of contemporary society.

The objection that retrospectively transformed the site of Rivera's Oñate in northern New Mexico became a constitutive principle in the creation of the *Cuartocentenario* for Albuquerque. Set on the grounds of the Albuquerque museum and in proximity to further sites of ethnic memories, Tiguex Park and Old Town Albuquerque, the work is placed in an urban space that has itself become a cultural artifact and archive of local memories. Rivera, Sabo and Naranjo-Morse's *Cuartocentenario* represents a commemorative work that unifies and juxtaposes the principles of monument and memorial. Its two sections visibly recreate the binary oppositions that organize self-perception and community expression in New Mexico. The *Cuartocentenario* accounts for several minority histories rather than a particular one and thus questions the boundaries that traverse the borderlands. The project development reproduces the paradigm shift in public art from authoritative to participatory forms, from individual authorship to cooperative expression, from edification of mind and morals to gratification of the senses, and from an aesthetic that emphasizes difference and boundary drawing to a sense of connectivity and reconciliation. As a result of the complex interaction between artists, community and administration, between private visions, group interests and civic accountability the project design downsized Oñate to a leader in a collective enterprise and elevated space to an agent in the formation of past and present identity in its own right. In contrast to the other two projects, spatial reflection enters into the project as a location of memory alongside the sculptural rendition. It is expressed in Nora Naranjo-Morse's section which deliberately confronts the linear visions of space in *La Jornada* with the circularity of *Numbe Whageh*. The realized project strikingly presents the competition between exclusive and inclusive models of identity and highlights the situatedness and ambiguities of identity in contemporary New Mexico. It explores the experience of a past moment and reflects on its significance rather than present a finished interpretation of its meaning. In the space of the *Cuartocentenario*, assertion makes room for reconciliation.

When read as frames of reference for identification, time and space move gradually closer to each other in the three Oñate monuments along the Rio Grande and sense of place turns from a ritual invocation into a creative principle: *The Equestrian* and his accompanying travelers in the project for El Paso still display rather arbitrary ties between the historical events they relate and the actual place where they are set. The monument in Alcalde already is situated more meaningfully and thus more precariously in the dual homeland of Pueblos and Hispanos. Alcalde represents a conceptual meeting ground where time and place encounter and confront each other. The controversy over the Alcalde vandalism revolved around the predicament of creating common ground, a shared use-area, for the diverse identities that make up our multicultural world in the 21st century. In Albuquerque, the approximation of

times and spaces for identification is closest as the project both represents and restages the historical encounter of two cultures. While in the other projects 'history' determined the representation and spatial expression of the past, in Albuquerque spatial contestation directed the forms of historical expression. Yet, owing to the split of the artistic collaboration into two sections, time and space do not fully converge.

The *Cuartocentenario* counts among a newly emerging class of memorials which, although still beleaguered by a continuing trend toward the figural and "the heroic model of memorial design" (Watts 1994: 81), perceptibly shift toward cooperation and inclusivity in project design and aesthetic in order to better account for the multivocality of memory and to establish an alternative image of ownership and authorship of the self and the past in multicultural expressive domains (cf. Watts 1994: 82). The *Cuartocentenario* invites us to rethink the cultural work performed by a site of memory when it juxtaposes the models of alter-nativity and sub-culture in the construction of minority identity and history. A sub-cultural understanding of ethnicity informs both Houser's *Equestrian* with its Mount Rushmorean frontier legacy and Rivera's sculptures with their Remingtonesque allusions. They construct ethnic identity as specific variations of the dominant culture within a hegemonic framework. Their monumentalizations of regional and local history amount to assertive gestures toward inclusion in a national narrative which are indebted to traditional approaches to the past and move the argument about that past into the purview of the culture wars in a polemic rejection of "political correctness." Their creations intensified the divisions and affirmed the segregational power of tri-ethnicity in New Mexico.

Where the memory of colonial times leads to an impasse in the controversy over the interpretation and assessment of Oñate's colonizing effort, the memory of spatial transformation that Naranjo-Morse proposes might forge new alliances that reach across ethnic and social boundaries in their effort to sustain regional culture through two of its vital resources – land and culture. When identity is built on place rather than time, unlike in the fantasy construct of 'Spanish heritage,' it can serve to integrate the community. Commemorative forms which are bound to place and region rather than the nation speak for the community rather than of it. In *Numbe Whageh*, Naranjo-Morse returns the Southwest to itself in proposing a scene of alter-nativity, of the emergence of identity from the place where it is lived and experienced rather than from spatial abstractions derived from movement through space.

From the interconnection of these recent sites of memory, the Rio Grande Southwest emerges as a region that responds to the economic and social transformations which demographic changes, immigration, NAFTA, and globalization have wrought with processes

of social realignment and cultural transformation. It is indeed a transitional zone, but in its transitionality will form a relevant focus of future development of the understanding of globalizing processes and cultural reverberations thereof in the former centers. Although the established dichotomies of center and margins are everywhere discernible in stereotypes and cultural practices, preferences and institutions, the regional reappraisal and redefinition goes beyond a reversal of old oppositions and acknowledgement of local knowledge. It rather tries to translate a perspective that looks out from the inside, relegates an omniscient point of view to a participatory perspective acknowledging its strengths without suppressing its limitations, to areas of cultural and memory work that have suffered from authoritarian interpretations. Therefore, what Gablik proclaimed with regard to the need for art to achieve a new, connective and relational aesthetic holds true for rethinking identity and memory as well: Not in the compartmentalization of ethnic nationalism and “historic contributions” but in a radical acknowledgment of the constructedness and interconnectedness of situated identities will the American past be understood and rendered usable for the present and future. Ideologies and interests have only been submerged, not disappeared from the spaces of social and cultural interaction. The study of memory will thus require an even more pronounced critical curiosity to develop its full potential for explaining the past we observe in the present to ourselves and others. I maintain that spatial approaches to memory processes and their ensuing spatial manifestations in tangible sites will not just expand the disciplinary scope of memory studies, but sharpen its critical acumen and political relevance.

ILLUSTRATIONS

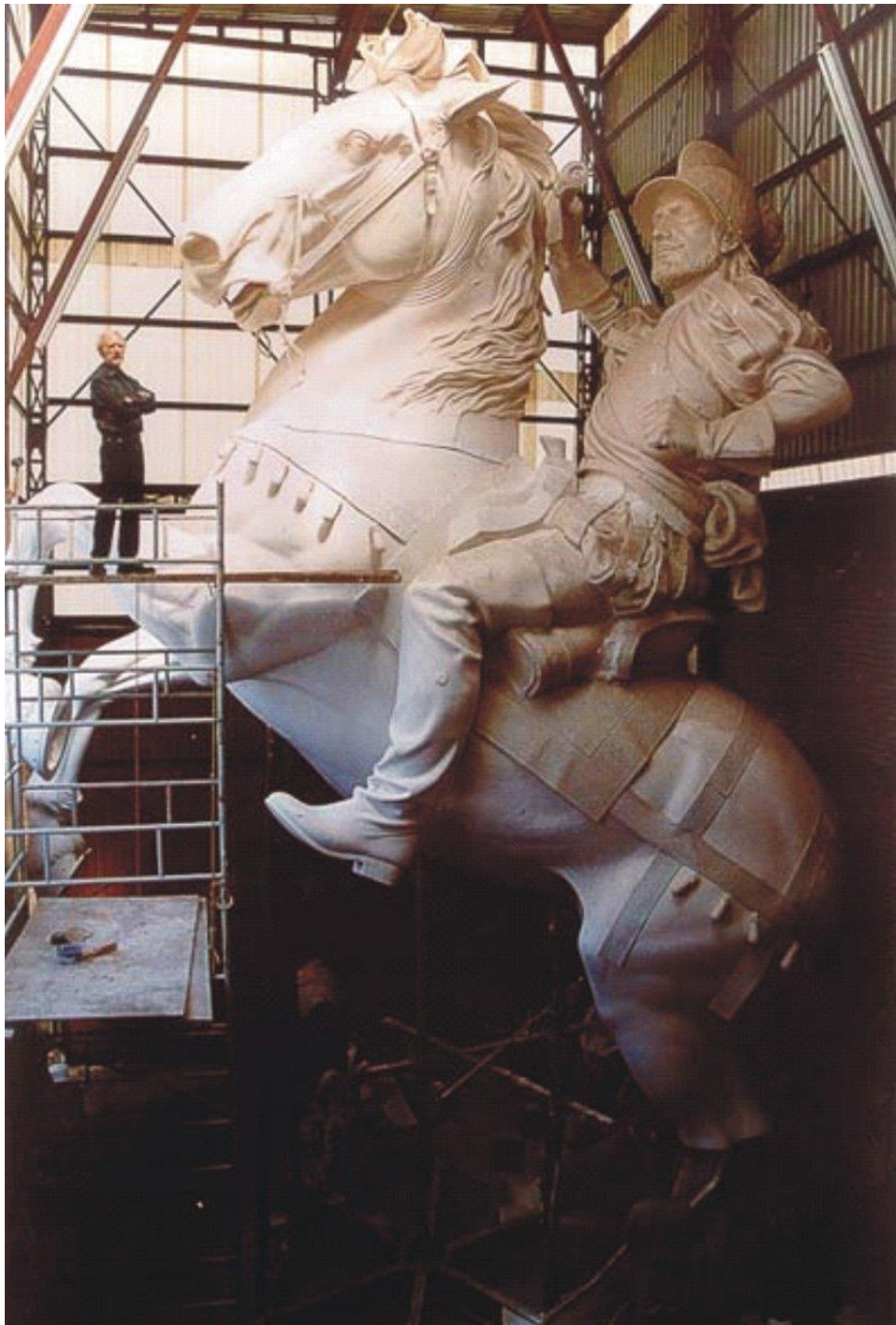


Figure 1: John S. Houser next to full-scale plaster cast for The Equestrian in his Mexico City studio (2001). The bronze casting was executed by a foundry near Santa Fe in 2005/2006. <<http://www.12travelers.org>>.

I WALK THROUGH HISTORY

Legend of Proposed Locations

- 1 Fray Garcia de San Francisco
- 2 Cabeza de Vaca, Castillo,
Dorantes, Esteban
- 3 Lozen
- 4 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado
- 5 Benito Juarez
- 6 Zebulon Pike
- 7 Antonio de Otermin
- 8 James Magoffin
- 9 Pancho Villa
- 10 Gaspar Castano de Sosa
- 11 Don Diego de Vargas
- 12 Don Juan de Oñate, Oñate
International Park

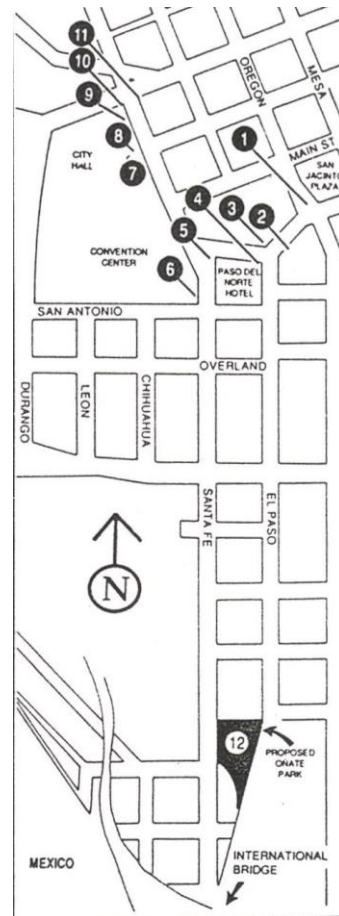


Figure 2: Map showing proposed locations for individual sculptures in downtown El Paso and proposed Oñate Park near international border; the planned Walk Through History partly overlaps with preexisting self-guided historic walking tours in the downtown area (location 1 to 6) while also expanding it toward the administrative part of the city (locations 7 to 11 along Convention Center block) (planning stage ca. 1990).



Figure 3: Section of Tom Lea's mural *Pass of the North* (1938).



Figure 4: Illustration depicting Fray Garcia's building the mission *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe* in Tom Lea's *Calendar* (1947).



Figure 5: Statue of Fray Garcia in Pioneer Plaza, downtown El Paso. April 2001.

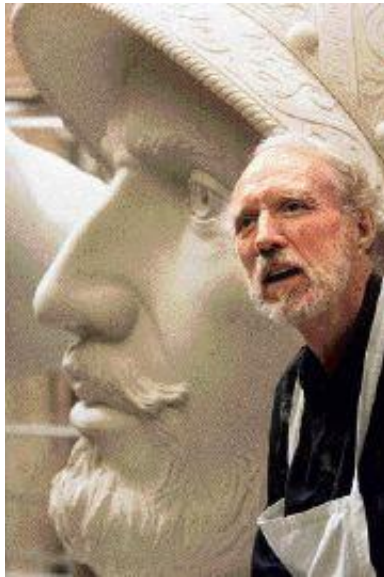


Figure 6: John S. Houser and the cast for Oñate's head in the enlarging studio in Mexico City.



Figure 7: The relocated Oñate statue now stands facing the highway and riding west; Oct. 2005.



Figure 8: Statue on rear patio at Oñate Monument and Visitor Center, Alcalde, NM (ca. 1998). View east across valley toward Sangre de Christo Mtn. Range; cf. Brooke 9. Feb. 1998 <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~jbloom/race/general/nmclash.htm>>



Figure 9: Oñate's foot. April 2001.



Figure 10: Oñate statue with bilingual plaque in front of OMVC. October 2005.

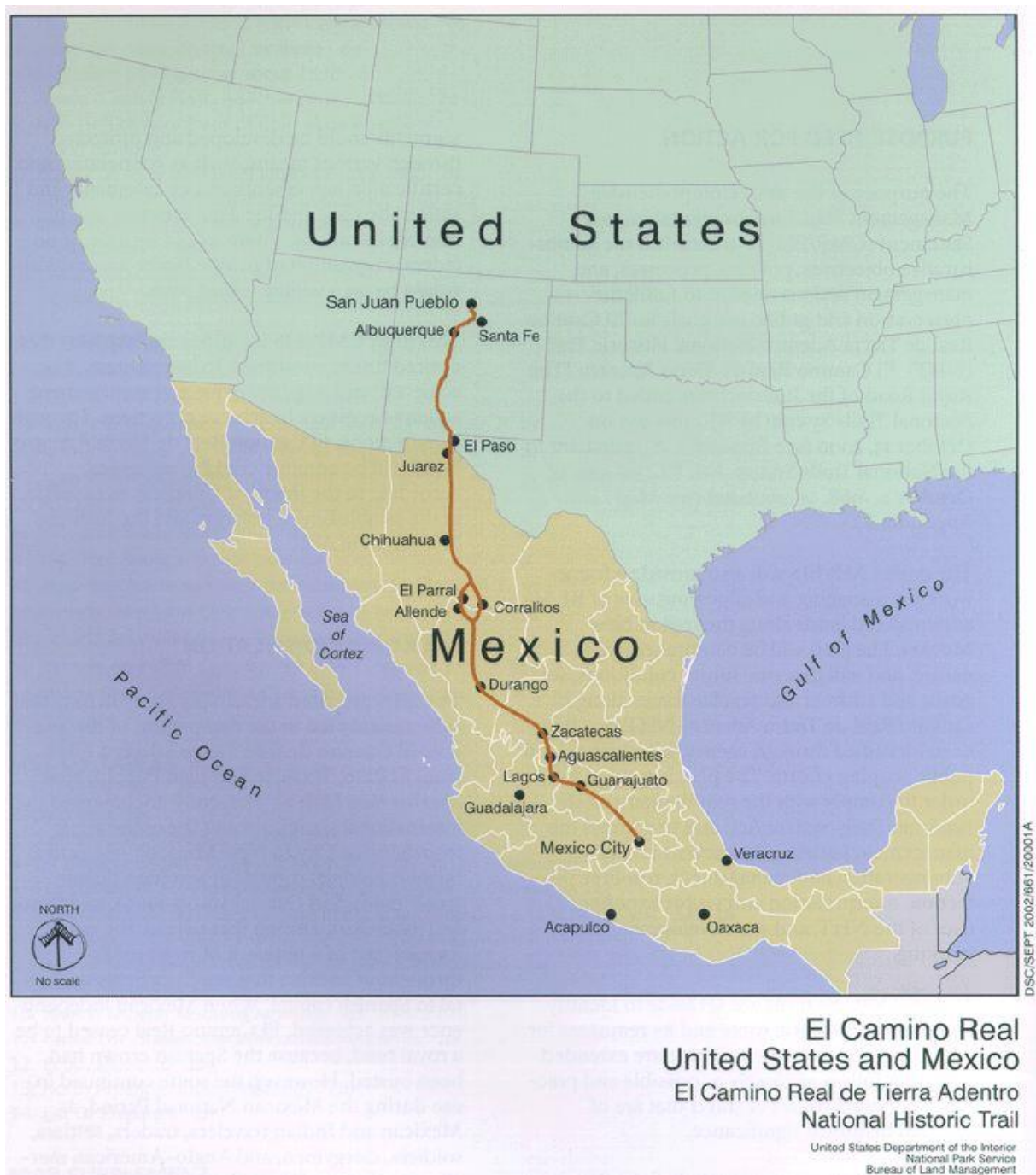


Figure 11: El Camino Real.



Figure 12: View east from *Numbe Whageh* towards *La Jornada*. The rocks at the center of the environment represent the place of emergence. Oct. 2005.

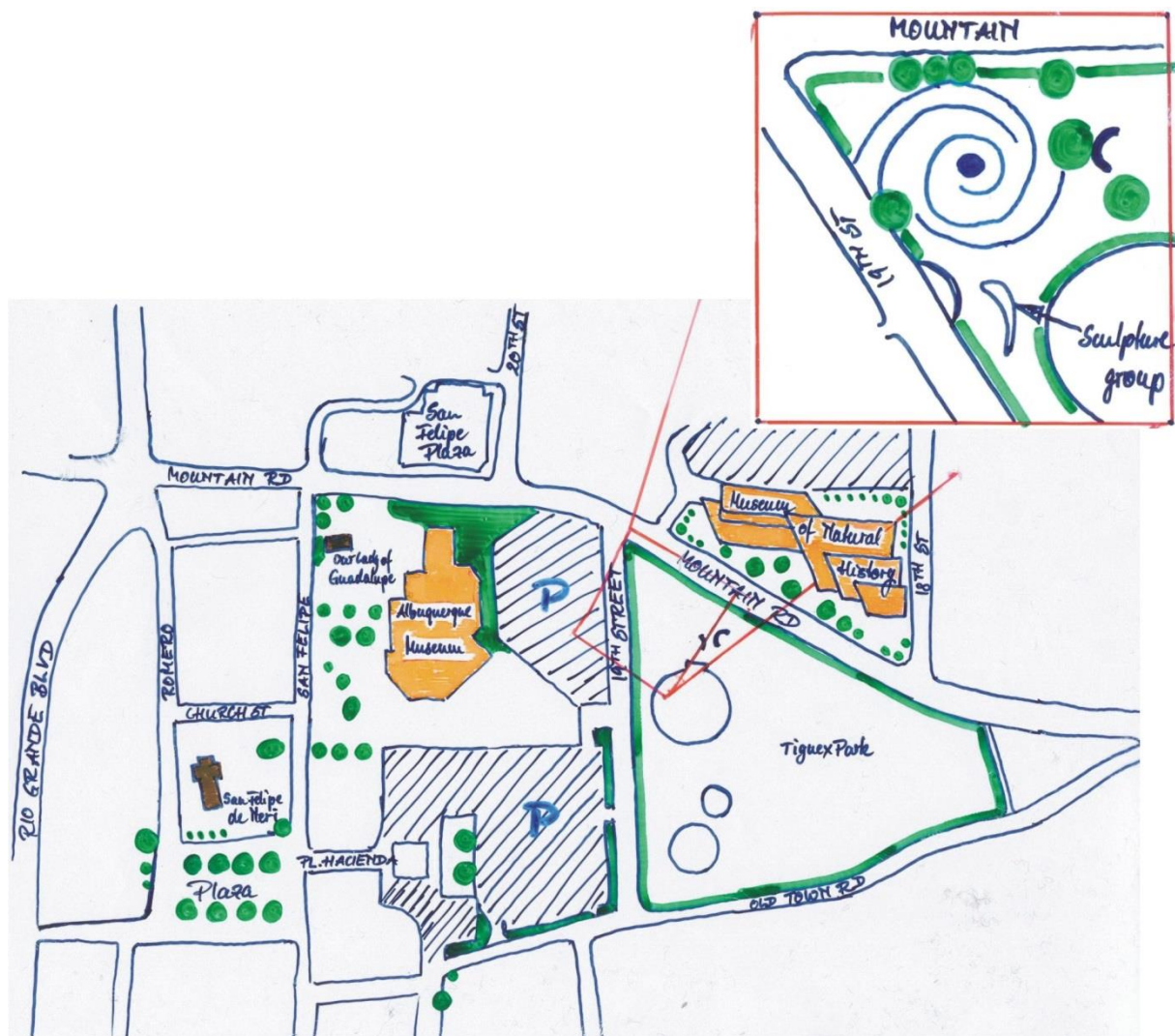


Figure 13: The map sketch establishes the spatial context of the museum grounds between Old Town and Tiguex Park. The inset shows the compromise design dating to December 1999. The northerly parking lot subsequently made room for the expansion of the museum and sculpture garden. Map by author.



Figure 14: Design sketch for the landscape installation in Tiguer Park, planning stage December 1999. Cf. DellaFlora 14 Dec 1999: C3.

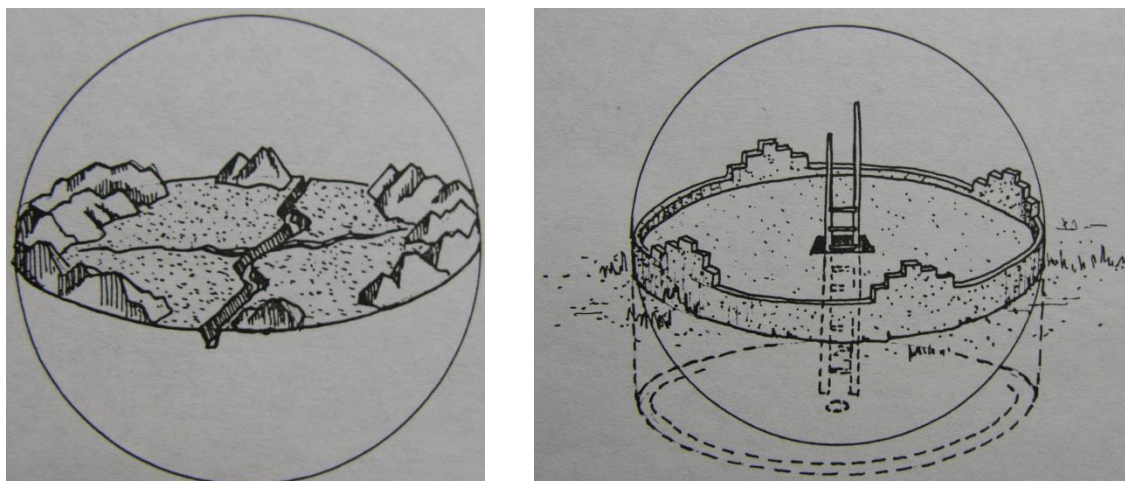


Figure 15: The cardinal landscape and kiva reflecting Pueblo cosmology. Swentzell 1990: 28.



Figure 16: Rivera's rendition of herders driving oxen depicting the hardship of the expedition. October 2005.



Figure 17: Though unidentified, Oñate leads the exploratory vanguard of colonists that includes an Indian guide, soldiers and a priest. He carries a scroll with the text of *La Toma*. View from east; Oct. 2005.

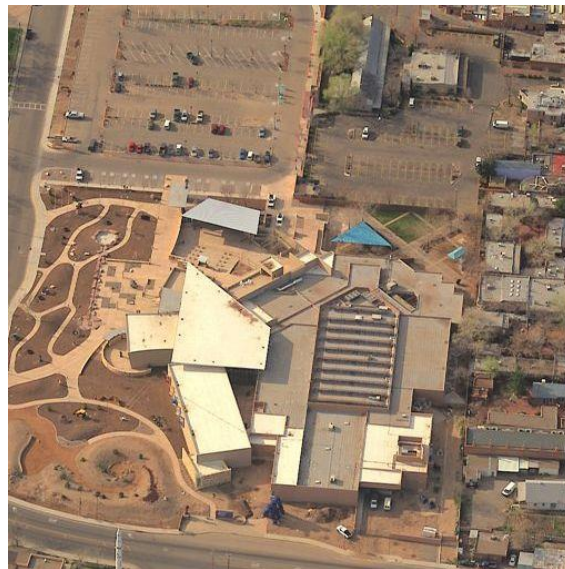


Figure 18: Aerial view (from the north) of the newly landscaped and expanded grounds of the Albuquerque Museum sculpture garden. The spiraled landscape for Numbeh Wageh and the adjoining elongated elevation for La Jornada are visible in the lower left corner, spring 2005 <<http://www.taospaint.com/Numbe/Whageh.html>>.



Figure 19: Rivera's depiction of a 'founding mother' helping a child on its way represents a tribute to (and portrays) Millie Santillanes's commitment to the education of Hispanic children. October 2005.

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